

PCZONE

THE BEST FOR PC GAMERS

#111 JANUARY 2002



WORLD EXCLUSIVE

UNREAL II

Seeing is believing as we unleash the biggest game of 2002

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CONTENTS

UNREAL II

PAGE 32

The best-looking game the PC has ever seen

EXCLUSIVE
PREVIEW

PAGE 38

MOST WANTED 2002

The biggest and best of 2002,
new screenshots and the latest updates on
Halo, Mafia, Medal Of Honor, Jedi Knight II and Total War 2... plus many more

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

LASER SQUAD NEMESIS

The creators of X-COM take
their latest creation online

88

BETA TEST

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

The RPG that has taken the US by storm



PAGE 110
WIN A FULL-SIZE POOL TABLE
Chalk, 50 pence coins, beer and friends - not included

CIVILIZATION III



BATTLE REALMS

60

64

ON THE CDS

FULL DETAILS PAGE 124

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

AQUANOX

SOUL REAVER 2

PLUS! FIFA 2002 • ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN • BALLISTICS • ZOO TYCOON • RED FACTION MULTIPLAYER • NEW YORK RACE • KINGDOM UNDER FIRE GOLD • PLAYASMANAGER 2 • COSSACKS: ART OF WAR • NHL 2002



REVIEWS

NEW GAMES

60 CIVILIZATION III

64 BATTLE REALMS

69 SOUL REAVER 2

70 JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL WORLD

72 MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002

75 WORLD WAR III: BLACK GOLD

76 FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

78 MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE

80 MOTORACER 3

81 BALLISTICS

82 ZOO TYCOON

100 CYCLING MANAGER



WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS PAGE 20

100 SILENT HUNTER II

101 THE SIMS: HOT DATE

101 FAMILY FORTUNES

102 REAL WAR

102 PATRICIAN 2

BUDGET GAMES

104 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

104 ABOMINATION

104 WARZONE 2100

PREVIEWS

32 UNREAL II

We kick off our 2002 special with an exclusive look at the biggest game of the year.

MOST WANTED 2002

40 HALO

40 PRAETORIANS

41 WARCRAFT III

42 HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

42 AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

44 MAFIA

44 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2

45 BRIDGE COMMANDER

46 GALLEON

47 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

47 NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

48 DUNGEON SEIGE

48 COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

49 REPUBLIC

50 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

50 FREELANCER

53 JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

54 MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

56 NOTHING TO SEE HERE

The latest on Duke Nukem Forever, Doom III, Team Fortress 2, Deus Ex 2 and more.

NEWS

10 CHASER

From the makers of Battle Isle 4.

12 LAST NINJA: THE RETURN

The classic C64 adventure is back.

18 TECHHEAD

News from Comdex 2001.

24 EMULATION ZONE

ChuChu Rocket! via the Atari ST.

REGULARS

28 MAILBOX

Dave Woods answers your letters.

106 FEEDBACK

Where you put us bang to rights.

108 REALITY CHECK

How does the sport of motocross stack up against the PC version?

112 HARDWARE REVIEWS

Speakers corner.

118 CHEATMASTER

Get low down and dirty.

120 WATCHDOG

The great PC swindle continues.

122 DEAR WANDY

Techy mumbo jumbo gubbins.

142 EXTENDED PLAY

Give your games a new lease of life.

WIN THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: The Compo No One Finds (111), PC.ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday January 9 2001. The winner of our October cover (issue 108) is Derek Holmes from Merseyside, while November's charming prize (issue 109) goes to Julian Baldwin from Croydon. Well done lads!

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Eurogamer.net
Oct 2001

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Glasgow Daily Record



PC CD-ROM

PlayStation®2

In Utero

<http://zorro.cryogame.com>



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2002 THE YEAR OF THE PC



The PC is a curious beast. Unlike dedicated games consoles, where the wow factor comes along in the shape of a new machine every few years, the defining moments in its evolution are harder to spot. We've come to expect great graphics these days and although incremental improvements have been made over the past few years, culminating in lookers like *Max Payne*, there hasn't really been a huge leap forward since 3D accelerator cards were introduced.

When the GeForce3 card was released earlier in the year, we knew that current games weren't utilising it to the full and predicted that next-gen games, (titles that were developed with the new feature set in mind) would come and

would blow you away. We've got the evidence in this month's magazine, with exclusive screenshots from the biggest games of 2002, including the first in-game visuals from what is shaping up to be the experience of one of the most exciting years in PC gaming, *Unreal II*.

Looking at the screenshots you might be tempted to pass them off as mock-ups, along with some of the other titles in our Most Wanted previews, but we've seen the game in

“We're convinced that we're witnessing the next step in the evolution of the PC as the cutting-edge gaming platform”

action and we're convinced that we're witnessing the next step in the evolution of the PC as the cutting-edge gaming platform. We're talking characters that are so real and detailed that you can see eye movement tracking you, and in-game environments that provide the sense of immersion that none of the games you can buy today deliver.

Hyperbole? Take a look for yourself and you might be tempted to start saving for a new card straight away. Even if you can't afford the current astronomical prices, you're not going to miss out because I predict that GeForce3 cards will be entry level before the end of 2002. The march of progress is incessant and engineers are already working on the next big thing, which gives the rest of us time to enjoy 2002 to the max. Which reminds me. Have a brilliant New Year and thanks for buying us in 2001.

Dave Woods
Editor



Unreal II. We've seen it running and we can tell you, it's real.

EPIC IS TOO SMALL A WORD

A CONQUEST SPANNING 500,000 YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY

STONE AGE

COPPER AGE

BRONZE AGE

MIDDLE AGE



650,000 B. C.

0 A. D.

3,500 B. C.

500 A. D.

COPPER AGE (5000 - 2000BC)



Play through 14 different epochs spanning 500,000 years of human history

INDUSTRIAL AGES (1700 - 1900AD)



Stunning 3D graphics bring life to over 200 different types of units

ATOMIC AGE (1900 - 2000AD)



Battle on land, sea and air as you fight to dominate the earth



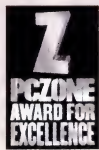
sierra-online.co.uk

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"Mind-boggling variety of units and buildings....a winning formula....supremely playable and totally engrossing..."

80% - PCZONE



"An enjoyable RTS game in the Age of Empire mold that will last even the most experienced of gamers quite some time"

89% - Strategy Player

"Make no bones about it: Empire Earth is a marvellous accomplishment"

88% - PC Gamer



INDUSTRIAL AGE

NANO AGE

RENAISSANCE

ATOMIC AGE



1000 A. D.

1940 A. D.

1700 A. D.

2500 A. D.

BY RICK GOODMAN
LEAD DESIGNER, AGE OF EMPIRES®



EMPIRE EARTH™

IN STORES NOW

FOR PC CD-ROM



TOP STORY

Get ready for a surprise...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Cauldron

PUBLISHER Fishtank Interactive

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q4 2002

WEBSITE www.chasergame.com

IN SUMMARY

In essence, *Chaser* is a pretty straightforward FPS, but promising a keen emphasis on storyline and character. Taking its lead from *Total Recall*, you play a covert agent with memory loss, pursued by military and outlaw forces across a futuristic Earth and eventually to Mars.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It looks stunning. The proprietary CloakNT engine is about as advanced a 3D engine as you'll find this side of John Carmack's hard drive, and is throwing out remarkably detailed characters and atmospheric environments. Toss in a halfway decent single-player storyline and you've got another cracking FPS.

CHASER

A genuine dark horse in the crowded FPS ranks

★ **AMNESIAC** Anthony Holden





The characters feature deformable muscles and multiple facial expressions.



The huge Siberian levels will offer respite from the mostly indoor environments.



The sniping possibilities are all too apparent.



The level design and texture work is looking top notch.

As preoccupied as this industry is with advances in graphical wizardry, no genre is quite as obsessed with the pursuit of cutting-edge technology as the first-person shooter. And what with your multi-million dollar budget *Doom 3*s and *Unreal Warfare*s ramping up the stakes, it's becoming increasingly tough for the battlers of the industry to compete on the same level.

This is just one of the reasons we admire Slovakian developer Cauldron so much. Not only does its in-house CloakNT engine boast a feature-set to rival the most well-funded celebrity developer, but its new game, the futuristic FPS *Chaser*, is looking grointingly good. It's also Cauldron's first foray into shooter territory, following success with games such as *Spellcross* and *Battle Isle: The Androsia War* – and all this in a country where games development is seen more as a hobby than a serious industry.

So what about this new game then? Set around a hundred years hence, *Chaser* takes place in a world governed by anarchy and violence. Gang wars, poverty and crime are rife in the cities, human suffering is at an all-time peak, and yet somehow we've colonised Mars. You step into this urban mire as a security agent called, oddly enough, *Chaser*. You've just returned, injured, from a covert mission, and to make matters worse you've gone and partially lost your memory. Now every two-bit mercenary, military commando and street hooligan with a knuckle-duster wants you dead – and you have no idea why.



Cue a protracted flight across various parts of the world – through city and harbour districts, across the icy wastes of Siberia, and eventually to Mars. Rather than single missions, the game will be composed as an ongoing narrative, the tense plot punctuated by intermittent flashbacks to your missing past. As well as straightforward

“The hugely detailed environments are brought to stunning life by the powerful CloakNT engine”

shooting action, you'll be forced to complete various objectives to ensure your survival, such as rescuing

hostages or escaping from a damaged space shuttle.

Cauldron tells us it's aiming above all to create unexpected situations and an atmosphere rich with tension. Indeed, from what we've seen to date, atmosphere could be the factor that sets *Chaser* apart from the herd. The hugely detailed environments, both indoor and out, are brought to stunning life by the powerful CloakNT

engine – the impressive tech specs for once translating into visible results on screen. Meticulous touches such as the inclusion of unique sound effects for every room, device and object featured in the game should also go a long way to fleshing out *Chaser*'s grimly appealing world.

Of course, the year ahead already promises some incredible FPS offerings, and the *Chaser* team has quite a task on its hands if it wants to compete, but at this stage we definitely wouldn't advise you to rule them out. **EW**



TOP STORY

From out of the shadows...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Studio 3
PUBLISHER Studio 3
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Christmas 2002
WEBSITE www.studio3.co.uk

IN SUMMARY

It's a 3D action/adventure reprising the classic ninja action of the original *Last Ninja* trilogy from way back in the '80s. Built on a mixture of stealth and arcade action, the game promises a vast playing environment, novel puzzle elements and a good dose of ninja magic.

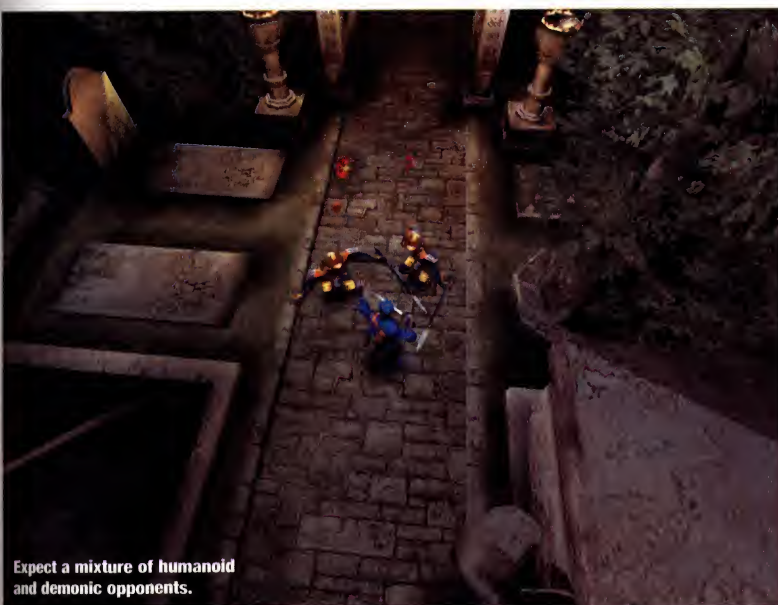
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It's *The Last Ninja*! And it's being developed by the same folks as the original series. Plus it looks great, with detailed environments and some nice solutions to the usual third-person camera problems. Add to this a naturally likeable array of ninja weapons and tricks and you've got a sure-fire recipe for entertainment.

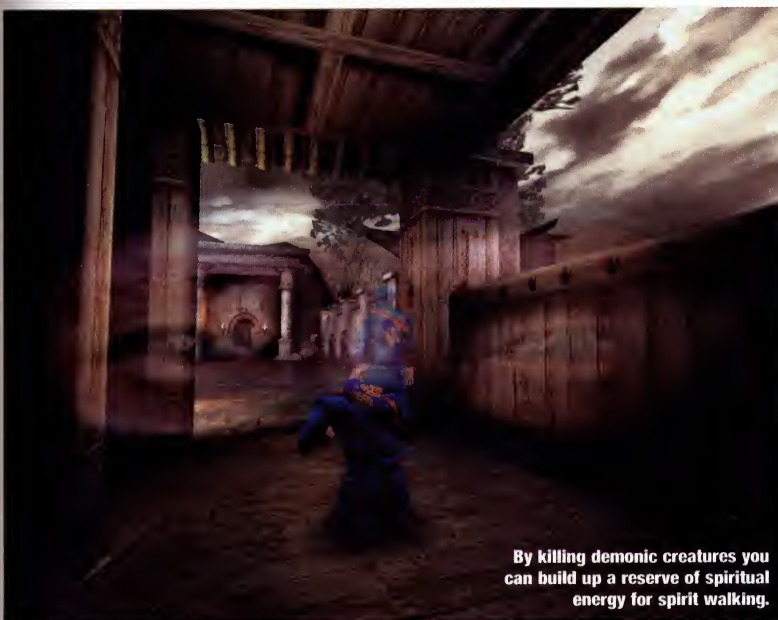
LAST NINJA: THE RETURN

One of the all-time classics of the 8-bit era is back with a vengeance

★ **SILENT BUT DEADLY** Anthony Holden



Expect a mixture of humanoid and demonic opponents.



By killing demonic creatures you can build up a reserve of spiritual energy for spirit walking.

You'll be the same character as in the previous games, but with a nice new blue suit.



Nostalgia. It's a beautiful thing. It makes you feel all warm inside and maybe just a little bit sad, and for some reason even the least sentimental of us seem to feel its inexorable tug when it comes to our favourite old games. And there's one title that's almost guaranteed to bring on bouts of teary-eyed reminiscence from anyone who owned a Commodore 64 in the late '80s: *The Last Ninja*. A relatively straightforward isometric adventure, the game was nonetheless ground-breaking for its stunning visuals, detailed environments and brilliant soundtrack – which you can still listen to at disturbingly earnest fan sites on the Net. The two sequels weren't half bad either.

We've known for some time that a fourth game in the series was in the

works down at Studio 3, the London-based developer responsible for the original trilogy, but until now the project has been under strict media blackout. Imagine our pleasure then, when we were invited to be the first-ever people to see the game, currently titled *Last*



Ninja: The Return, and get a hands-on look at how it's shaping up. "We've aimed to have as simple a control

system as possible," revealed John Twiddy, lead programmer, as he navigated the familiar masked figure around the darkly appealing 3D environments. "In terms of fighting there's just two buttons, and you automatically lock on to opponents."

Sounds familiar. As indeed it should, as the game is aiming for a fairly proven mix of action/adventure elements, with a balance between stealth and arcade combat, puzzle elements and exploration. While

come up with that. We're trying to get as much of that in as we can."

So aside from the usual selection of swords, staves and throwing stars, you'll find blowpipes, 'Nightingale floors' (an authentic anti-ninja system that rattled chains and cages when an intruder stepped on them) and maybe even a crude aqualung. Somewhat more far-fetched are the various forms of magic at your disposal, including the ability to create a false image of yourself to distract opponents, potent

“Almost guaranteed to bring on bouts of teary-eyed reminiscence from anyone who owned a Commodore 64 in the late '80s”

this is no bad thing, the game promises to distinguish itself through the many neat ninja tricks and weapons at your disposal, as well as a generally dark and ominous atmosphere.

"We've done a tremendous amount of research into the traditions of Japan and the ninjas," John assured us. "It's amazing how many gadgets they had, that you think no way could they have

elemental powers (fire, lightning, cyclone), and 'spirit walking', a neat trick that enables you to take on ethereal form and scout out new areas.

As if all that weren't enough, John eventually played his trump card: "We're trying to take all the little puzzles from the original game and put them in there somewhere too." The tears are welling already. **[P]**

BULLETIN

The Killer App

NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden



There's no getting away from it – the biggest news in the industry right now is the launch of the

Xbox and GameCube in the US. It was always going to be a bit of an ambivalent moment for dedicated PC gamers, as on the one hand the whole industry will clearly benefit from the massively increased volume and visibility of games arising from the console wars, while on the other hand there are games out there that we want to play and can't. News that *Halo*, a game originally intended for the PC, is as brilliant as we suspected only makes matters worse.

One clear advantage consoles have over PCs is the 'killer app' mentality, where the hardware manufacturer loosens the strings of its obscenely bulging purse and proceeds to throw money at a game until it's a triple-A hit. Games like *Halo* never need to make their money back as long as they sell a few Xboxes along the way, and no game for the PC ever has this liberty. Of course, the other side of the coin is that for every *Halo* or *Grand Theft Auto III* there's a hundred digitised turds out there to justify its existence, but that's just the way the scales of justice hang.

The good news for us is that players such as NVIDIA are increasingly driving the market for PC gaming hardware, and are working with developers more closely to ensure the release of their latest chipset is accompanied by killer apps for the PC. While so far these have mostly been pretty but rather shallow affairs (such as *Ballistics*, reviewed on page 81), they're starting to realise that people will only buy so many futuristic racing games.

And, of course, we do get to see the leading console games on our screens, however belatedly. Everyone's happy then.



They spent so long shading the sunset they forgot to model any characters.



Proof that the Jupiter strand of the LithTech engine is stunning.



Expect to see Ms Archer shooting someone here in the year 2002.

Jupiter rising

No One Lives Forever – but a sequel is the least you can hope for

Cate Archer might not have overly impressed us in her first outing, but Monolith seems to be improving with age, and there's one very good reason why we're getting excited over the first screenshots for *No One Lives Forever 2*. That reason, of course, is *Aliens Vs Predator 2*, Monolith's recent shooter, which was not only a cracker but the first FPS to get a Classic award since *Unreal Tournament*.

There's no information as yet, although the embargo is going to be lifted by next month. We do know that the game is going to be powered by the LithTech Jupiter system, which is the latest high-end 3D engine from Monolith, and like the first title it looks stunning.

Hopefully it will stretch the genre past the advance-shoot-advance formula that let the first game down, and if Monolith can

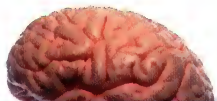
inject some of the atmosphere and narrative of its current masterpiece then we might, just might, have to elevate the developer into the elite rank shared by power players id, Valve and Epic.

In further unconnected news, Monolith has also announced plans to release the LithTech Discovery System in 2002, a brand new 3D engine designed specifically for developing massively multiplayer online games. Expect to hear of new games using the engine in early 2002, but we already know that Monolith is hard at work on one of its own. We'll have more on this soon – as they say, watch this space.

TECH HEAD

All the latest techie news, with a report from Comdex 2001

P:18



THE PCZONE CHARTS

Read 'em, love 'em, win 'em

P:20



EMULATION ZONE

ChuChu Rocket! on PC? Outrageous!

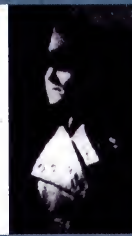
P:24



MAN WHO KNOWS

It's all too easy in this dirty industry

P:26



Dual shock

First look at *Duality*, probably the first ever Spanish cyberpunk action RPG

Described as a cross between *Metal Gear Solid*, *System Shock* and *Deus Ex*, *Duality* is the debut project for start-up Spanish developer Trilobite. Never heard of 'em? Well, Trilobite was founded in 1998 by 20 ex-members of Pyro, the codeshop behind the brilliant *Commandos* games, in conjunction with international developer/publisher Phantagram. (Incidentally, we've got a demo of Phantagram's latest offering, *Kingdom Under Fire Gold*, which you can check out on this month's coverdiscs.)

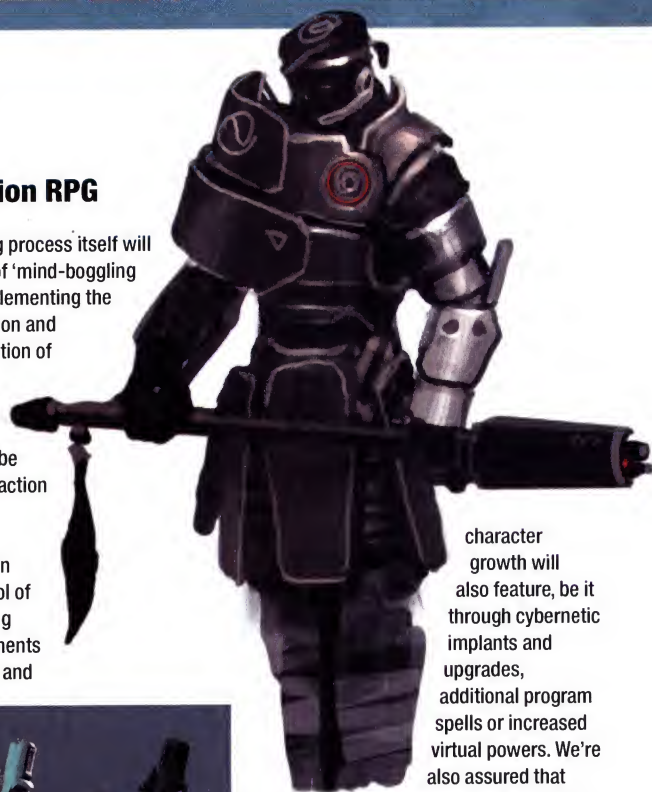
Having been mightily impressed with what we saw of *Duality* at ECTS, we recently pursued the chaps at Trilobite for a little tete à tete about their first project, and they proved to be most forthcoming. "It's basically a mixture of adventure, RPG, and action in that order of importance," offered Iñigo Hernández Laviña, president and executive producer at Trilobite. "The storyline will be played through three different characters with their own special abilities and aspects."

While having a selection of characters with different abilities is something we're only too familiar with, in this case each character will actually perceive the world in very different ways, thus offering a multi-faced vision of reality. "The mercenary is the starting character, because he is played in the most conventional way (like *Metal Gear* or *Tenchu*), but with more possibilities

and freedom. His equipment includes firearms, sensors, jammers, optic camouflage and implants for assault and infiltration." In good cyberpunk style, the other characters are a female hacker and a powerful virtual being struggling with his new-found identity as a formless cyber entity.

"The hacker is forced to use more stealth since she is not a good fighter in the real world, but once in cyberspace she can combine functions from her Program Bible to use special abilities (think of magic spells in a fantasy RPG). Of course, she becomes vulnerable to an ambush when connected to a Net system, so she needs to place traps and sensors around her."

The hacking process itself will take the form of 'mind-boggling puzzles', complementing the fast-paced action and stealthy infiltration of the real-world sequences. Of course, there will also be more abstract action sequences in cyberspace, especially when you take control of the virtual being character. Elements of role-playing and

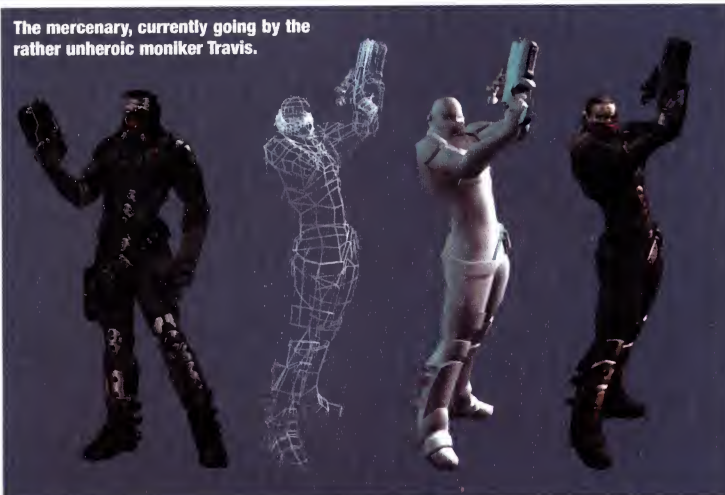


character growth will also feature, be it through cybernetic implants and upgrades, additional program spells or increased virtual powers. We're also assured that there will be *Deus Ex*-

like freedom to complete each level in whatever way you choose.

Although little in-game artwork is available, it's clear to see where *Duality* is headed – a thoroughly cyberpunk atmosphere right up to visual realisations of cyberspace, multiple characters in co-operative missions, infiltration/action/puzzle sequences and massive polygon count. Even at this stage it's looking mighty impressive.

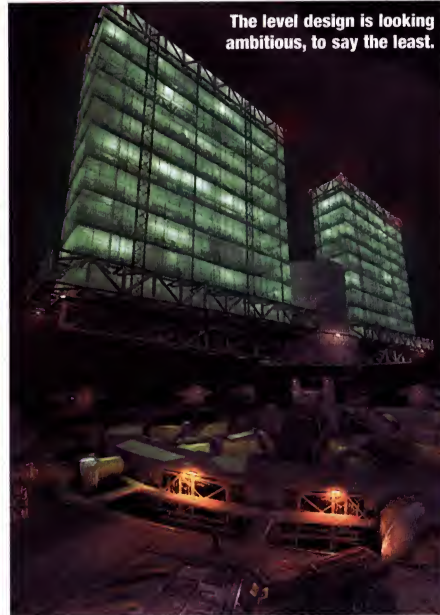
The mercenary, currently going by the rather unheroic moniker Travis.



Trilobite Graphics • ETA late 2002 • www.e-duality.com/



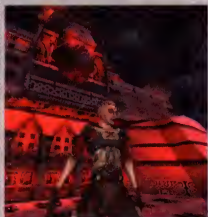
The game takes place in a dark, industrial vision of future New York.



The level design is looking ambitious, to say the least.

SHORTS

FISTING THE NIGHT AWAY



Sabotage: Fist Of The Empire is an action RPG just announced by publisher CDV. Set in the distant future, you'll play a secret agent carrying out special missions in an enemy city. It's being developed by Russian codeshop Avalon Style Entertainment, now apparently just called Avalon Ltd. Last we heard of them they were making a game modelled entirely in clay. We'll leave you to draw your own conclusions.

CPL CHAMPS



The Cyberathlete Professional League World Championships took place in Dallas from the 5th to 9th of December, with clans from around the world competing at *Counter-Strike* for a first prize of \$50,000. The UK was represented by the well-known 4 Kings Clan, who took out the AMD UK Qualifier for the Championships in November, beating out Nocturne in an intense finals bout. While the Championships still hadn't been played as we went to press, the results will by now be available from The Playing Fields (the UK co-ordinators for the CPL) through their website, www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

NOCTURNE THE MOVIE



Nocturne, Terminal Reality's 1999 action/adventure fright-fest, is being turned into a big-budget Hollywood film. Apparently the script has already been penned by Brent Friedman (writer on TV's *Dark Skies*) and Steve DeJarnatt (writer and director of *Miracle Mile*). Collision Entertainment will begin shooting the action/adventure film next year, though fans may be disappointed to hear that they're aiming for a PG-13 rating.

One true Kreed

Russian FPS *Kreed* threatens the balance of power

The post-Soviet development scene continues to impress, as Russian codeshop Burut reveals more of its upcoming first-person shooter *Kreed*.

Set entirely inside a black hole into which you and several different alien races have been sucked, the game promises 17 missions, each played across one of the various stranded spaceships and split into several separate levels.

In the single-player game you'll regularly play as part of a team, with NPCs that give and take orders depending on rank, although you won't stay in the same unit throughout. Some missions, usually those involving more stealth, will involve going off on your own, before meeting back up with team-mates later in the story.

The real reason the game's getting a bit of attention though, is the brand new X-

Tend engine, which is one of a new breed of powerhouses built with the new features of the GeForce 3 card in mind. As the name suggests, it's been designed to be fully adaptable, meaning that new graphics feature sets will be able to be incorporated with the minimum of fuss. We've seen a three-minute in-game movie (downloadable from www.burut.ru/download/video if your connection can stand

the 30Mb hit) and it's looking pretty damn good, with the 'extremely dangerous flamethrower' rivalling *Wolfenstein's* and the layered fogging (that's moved by flying missiles and other objects) nearly eliciting gasps of amazement from the PC ZONE office. Expect a multiplayer test before summer.

Burut • ETA Christmas 2002 • www.burut.ru



Look at the ripples on that.



Hopefully we'll get to fly one of these.

Change of strategy

Arcturus eschews convention with a mixture of RTS and first-person action

New UK developer BlueInca has revealed its new 3D action/RTS *Arcturus*, predictably promising to draw on the best ideas from current strategy games while offering a 'unique' experience.

However, BlueInca goes on to talk the talk, promising a blend of FPS and RTS (battles are played out from the first-person perspective), with a sci-fi setting between two warring factions – the Lumerans and the Xizons. Kicking off with you very much on the defensive, the game promises to eschew the standard linear

mission structure, putting you in charge of two major goals – leading the fight from region to region and progressing the species through four technological stages. On each level, you and the AI have to form your own goals and objectives based on what you discover in the region, and you'll have to constantly re-evaluate these as the game progresses and your view of the world changes.

BlueInca isn't saying much about the units in the game, but we know they're going to range from weak 6m long hover vehicles to vast battle

carriers 600m in length. The problem of micro-management is going to be avoided by placing units not currently under your orders in the hands of AI, which means they'll make decisions independently of you until such time as you step in and issue a command.

Without having seen the game in action, we couldn't possibly comment on how all these features are going to stack together, but it's certainly an interesting mix.

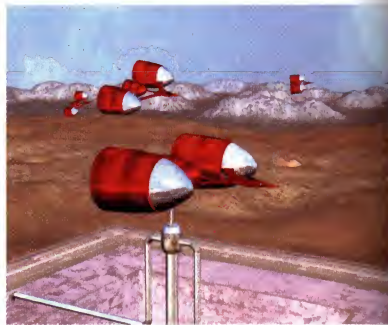
BlueInca • ETA: Early 2003 • www.blueinca.co.uk



Sci-fi RTS with a hint of FPS?



The unit designs look good enough to eat...



But how's it going to play from this viewpoint?

The New RTS Game From Ed Del Castillo

Best RTS Game at E3 2001 IGN.com



SHINJA
SERPENT CLAN

"ONLY STRENGTH AND THE WILLINGNESS TO USE IT CAN PRESERVE US."

UNIT ALCHEMY: THE MARK OF A GREAT WARRIOR IS THE FUSION OF BODY AND MIND.

THE UNIT ALCHEMY SYSTEM ALLOWS EVEN A SINGLE PEASANT TO GROW INTO A POWERFUL SAMURAI WARRIOR.

ZYMETH
LOTUS CLAN



"THE WARLOCKS OF THE FORBIDDEN PATH HAVE CONQUERED DEATH ITSELF, BUT I AM STILL THEIR MASTER."

LIVING RTS REALM: BATTLEFIELDS COME ALIVE WITH WEATHER AND WILD LIFE. COMBAT WILL CHANGE AS THE ELEMENTS SHIFT.



KENJI
DRAGON CLAN

"I AM KENJI, LORD OF THE DRAGON CLAN. MY ANCESTORS BROKE THE WORLD."

UNIQUE CHARACTER: BUILD AN ARMY, ONE WARRIOR AT A TIME. CHOOSE THEM WISELY AND MANAGE EACH UNIT CAREFULLY. THEY ARE THE LIFE-BLOOD OF YOUR CLAN.

GRAYBACK
WOLF CLAN



"HEAR ME, SORCERERS: YOU CANNOT CAGE THE WOLF."

GROWTH ON THE BATTLEFIELD: NOBLE ARTS DURING COMBAT CAN EARN YOU ZEN POINTS FOR WARRIORS TO IMPROVE THEIR POWERS AND MAGIC.

GamesDomain

"We're supremely impressed... Among the teeming masses of RTS titles, it's an oriental gem with many facets to explore."

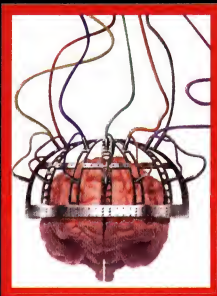


BATTLE REALMS

EVERY WARRIOR HAS A NAME
AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER 2001

www.battlerealms.co.uk

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TECHHEAD

Industry announcements from Comdex, plus a heavily laden graphics card

★ TECHN0ID Carlos Ruiz

COMDEX 2001

A relative non-event this year, though a few companies still showed up...

Due largely to recent world events, technology exhibition Comdex 2001 attracted significantly less exhibitors than previous years. However, a reduced shop floor and hardly a soul in sight didn't discourage a dozen or so companies from exhibiting some interesting wares.

Zapmedia was a good place to start, where demonstrations of their new ZapStation were taking place. A unit the size of a separate CD player, it plugs into any TV/hi-fi set-up and becomes the centre of all your audio and visual media. It plays DVDs, can be used to surf the Net, and has jukebox features that allow you store music and video files from CDs and the Net. Artist, title, and song information are recorded automatically, and the playlist functions to organise everything stored on the sizeable 30Gb hard disk. However, the US\$1,499 asking price could buy you a meaty PC.

Winning in the style stakes yet again is Sony, with the storage medium you can slip in a pocket. Sony's Micro Vault capsules are about the same size as a cigarette lighter and with a USB connection at one end, they can be plugged directly into the vast majority of PCs for instant data transfer.



Carry your music, videos and important files wherever you go.

Even better is that you don't even need drivers when the device is used on Windows 2000/Me/XP computers, and you can always take the driver CD as well if you're going to use a Win 98 machine. The Micro Vaults come in 16Mb (orange), 32Mb (red), 64Mb (blue), and 128Mb (black) capacities, and prices start at around £35 and £60 for the orange and red capsules.

Meanwhile, MSI's new K7N420 ATX motherboard (based on the gaming-orientated nForce chipset from NVIDIA) is to be released in a smart red finish in the near future. The board will support Socket A processors such as the Athlons, Athlon XPs and Durons, and features include support for 200/266MHz FSB and AGP 4X, as well as integrated multimedia: a GeForceMX-class advanced GPU and an Audio Processor Unit.

Early testing of NVIDIA's first stab at the motherboard market has

revealed performance increases of about three per cent over the popular KT266A and AMD-760 alternatives. However, it comes in third place when dealing with 2D applications. With updated drivers, punters are hoping that both fields can be improved when the nForce motherboards make their debut.

UPMARKET GEFORCE

Feature-packed, fast and... not that cheap

Ending a long run of indifferent graphics card releases, Asus has conjured up a particularly spicy example of NVIDIA's latest GeForce3 chip. The V8200-T5 Deluxe card is loaded with complementary features in hardware and software, setting it apart from the vast majority of GeForce3 cards on the market.

Both the Deluxe and its toned-down alternative, the V8200-T5 Pure, sport the same GeForce3 Titanium 500 GPU, as well as a clockspeed of 240MHz and 64Mb of DDR-SDRAM. They also share the versatile Smartdoctor software and a standard monitor output, but the 'Deluxe' goes further. You get enough connectivity: S-Video In, HD15 D-Sub Out, S-Video Out, Composite (RCA)

Out... and Stereoscopic 3D Out. Yes, they even bundle a pair of ultra-nerdy 3D glasses into the package, as well as software that can enable the required effect on the screen in Direct3D and OpenGL modes.

The video-editing inputs allow you to link up to video cameras and the like, while the Digital VCR application effectively turns your PC into a digital video recorder. A TV signal can be tuned in from a separate TV tuner, and DVCR can be used to pause,



Strictly for non-social occasions.

rewind and record programmes in a TiVo-esque manner.

The Smartdoctor software is used for monitoring the card, with excellent features to aid overclockers in their quest, such as the ability to read temperature data directly off a Winbond chip on the card itself. You can easily adjust core and memory clockspeeds in Windows, without the need to reset the machine.

Asus has board designs that have been consistently proven with previous GeForce chipsets, and this is another fine example of how to make the most out of an extremely capable chipset. ATI's competing card, the Radeon 8500 All-In-Wonder, is also due to be released in the near future.

FACTCANNON

Affordable DVD writers may materialise sooner than expected, with Swiss firm Vivistar leading the effort. Their RS-121 DVD-R drive has good software which supports multi-session writing on DVD-R media, and looks set to be priced from £70 to £150 less than other models. The other news of note is that the price of Vivistar media will be similarly reduced. Check out www.vivistar.com for more details.

Belkin is a relative newcomer to the gaming peripheral arena, and its latest offering represents a bold attempt to cash in on the 'gaming mouse' market. The Nostromo n30 Game Mouse will sell for around £30 and boasts Immersion's TouchSense technology, which



provides tactile feedback in a similar mould to a console rumble pack. It is fully customisable and is supported in games such as *Black & White*, *Unreal Tournament*, and *Half-Life*.

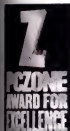
More good news on the DVD-R front: Hitachi's upcoming GMA-4020B drive has an ATAPI interface and can read and write to DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD-RAM and CD-R/RW discs. That's all the standards approved by DVD Forum, which sorts out some issues that surrounded the format on release. The GMA-4020B will be shipping early next year.

It's a phone, a web-browser, an e-mailer, a PDA, an mp3 player, in fact it does everything but mow the lawn. It's a unique GSM mobile device called a Pogo, and it's launching this January for around £300. The most impressive thing about it is the full colour hi-speed web access, using neat compression technology to display any web page exactly how it would appear on your desktop. Of course it also does loads of other tricks, and squeezes a 3.8in front-lit touch screen into a package that's 150mm across diagonally, 20mm deep and weighs 240g. The Pogo will only be available through Carphone Warehouse outlets, and we'll have a review of it in next issue's Gadgets page.



Tom Clancy's GHOST RECON™

Ubi Soft



PC Zone

"A masterful combination of tactics and action."

IGN insider

9.3 / 10 "The franchise moves in a new direction - and you'll want to come for the ride"

M4 Assault Carbine
Length: 39.63 inches (100.66 centimeters)
Weight (empty): 6.5 pounds (2.54 kilograms)
Bore diameter: 5.56mm (.233 inches)
Muzzle velocity: 2,900 feet (884 meters) per second
Rate of fire: 700-900 rds/min
Magazine capacity: 20 or 30 rounds

Combat Helmet
Material: Kevlar® Composite
Resistance: V50 ballistic resistance 2,150 fps (655 Mps)
Fire Resistance: up to 375 F (190 C) continuous
Weight: 1.59 Kilos (medium size)
Kevlar® is a registered trademark of E.I. duPont de Nemours and Co., Inc.



Body Armor
Protection Level: II, IIIA, III
Protected zones: Full Front, Back and Side
Protection: Neck protection, Shoulder protection
Armor: Kevlar® and Ceramic backed with Aramid
Weight: 7.0 Kilos (medium size)
Additional features:
- Waterproof and water
- Equipped with removable ballistic panels
- Pockets on chest for rifle clips, automatic
- Handgrips, radio, flashlight and grenade

Next-generation military technology uses the newest infantry gear and weaponry such as the OICW for lethal strikes.

Realistic infantry model studied at Fort Bragg (Fayetteville, NC)

Enhanced control and planning of your squad of elite soldiers gives faster paced action.

Reward experience points for your soldiers to improve skills such as endurance, leadership weapons handling and stealth.

Deadly multi-player games with up to 36 opponents including death match and co-operative modes.

AUTUMN:WINTER* RANGE:2008

From the makers of *Rainbow Six*™, Tom Clancy's *Ghost Recon*™ is a squad-based first-person action/strategy game with near-future military action. You are part of a US special forces platoon, nicknamed "The Ghosts" and armed with the Army's latest technology. Often hired by the UN for international peacekeeping operations, your speciality is covert military strikes. You will scope out the defenses of an enemy, blow up bridges to stop an advance, raid rebel bases, and rescue an American pilot who gets shot down deep in enemy territory. For you it's just another day, just another job.

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www.ubisoft.co.uk

www.ghostrecon.co.uk

For a limited time period, purchasers of *Ghost Recon* can buy the original award winning **TOM CLANCY'S: RAINBOW SIX** for just £2.99 (plus post and packaging). See pack and web site for details

Limited to UK residents only. Offer ends March 31st 2001. Must be over 15 years old.

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not



Harry Potter mania has gripped the nation, apparently.

THE megastores TOP10

NOV	DEC	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	HARRY POTTER PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	KNOWWONDER	EA	NA
NE	2	CIVILIZATION III	FIRAXIS	INFOGRAMES	86%
NE	3	ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2	MONOLITH	VIVENDI	93%
NE	4	EMPIRE EARTH	STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS	VIVENDI	80%
1	5	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
NE	6	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	MAXIS	EA	71%
NE	7	STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEFIELDS	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	84%
NE	8	TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON	RED STORM	UBI SOFT	86%
NE	9	FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002 PRO	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	88%
NE	10	ZOO TYCOON	BLUE FANG GAMES	MICROSOFT	48%

THE TOP10

NOV	DEC	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	HARRY POTTER – PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	KNOWWONDER	EA	NA
1	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
NE	3	CIVILIZATION III	FIRAXIS	INFOGRAMES	86%
NE	4	ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2	MONOLITH	VIVENDI	93%
NE	5	FIFA 2002	EA SPORTS	EA	63%
2	6	C&C RED ALERT 2: YURI'S REVENGE	WESTWOOD	EA	80%
NE	7	ZOO TYCOON	BLUE FANG GAMES	MICROSOFT	48%
NE	8	FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002 PRO	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	88%
10	9	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
4	10	STRONGHOLD	FIREFLY	TAKE 2	84%

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

You can tell it's Christmas, as the inevitable FIFA update and Harry Potter cash-ins have arrived, but thankfully there are also some quality games in there. *AvP2* is superb and I was pleasantly surprised by *Stronghold*. It's actually quite a lot of fun, especially the multiplayer mode.

2naface

Aliens Vs Predator 2 is a superb and very frightening game, if there was any justice it would be number one. I hope that it doesn't get overlooked in the Christmas rush.

Fozzie22

I don't know about anyone else, but this whole Harry Potter thing is getting on my swede. They reckon it's going to be the biggest-grossing film of all time, and now the game is number one as well. What's the world coming to?

Numbzskull

The Harry Potter game getting to number one was inevitable, but I doubt it'll stay in the charts for long after the parents have bought it for their kids for Christmas. I was surprised that *Civ 3* is up there considering its low-key release.

SLOTH82

It's all crap except for *AvP2* and *Yuri's Revenge*. Where are all the action games? We're turning into a nation of anoraks. Action fans, stop playing *Counter-Strike* for five minutes and go and buy a new shooter. *AvP2* is a bloody good place to start, and its multiplayer is among the most innovative in ages. I can't wait to see what the mod community come up with for this one.

naZdaQ

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

All the big Christmas releases have taken fairly predictable places in the charts, although... *Zoo Tycoon*?! Of course we would have liked to have seen *AvP2* in the top spot, but the power of unscrupulous marketing types to manipulate impressionable young minds into hassling their overworked parents to buy *Harry Potter* tie-ins can never be underestimated. What's more interesting are the quality games that never made the charts. Mainly I'm thinking of *Project Eden*. What the hell happened there? A great game, a big name developer and strong publisher – yet somehow a thorough marketing cock-up left that game firmly out in the cold. Wander down to your local games outlet and check out the featureless packaging and you'll start to get an idea of what went wrong.

Anthony Holden

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO

- 1 Champ Manager 00/01 (Eidos)
- 2 Who Wants To Be A Millionaire (Eidos)
- 3 Red Alert 2 (EA)
- 4 FIFA 2001 (EA)
- 5 Sudden Strike (CDV)

2 YEARS AGO

- 1 Age Of Empires II (Microsoft)
- 2 FIFA 2000 (EA)
- 3 FA Premier League Manager 2000 (EA)
- 4 MS Flight Sim 2000 Pro (Microsoft)
- 5 Tiberian Sun (EA)

5 YEARS AGO

- 1 FIFA 97 (EA)
- 2 Screamer 2 (Virgin)
- 3 Encarta 97 (Microsoft)
- 4 Flight Sim 6 (Microsoft)
- 5 Tomb Raider (Eidos)

COMPETITION WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

Once again, PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

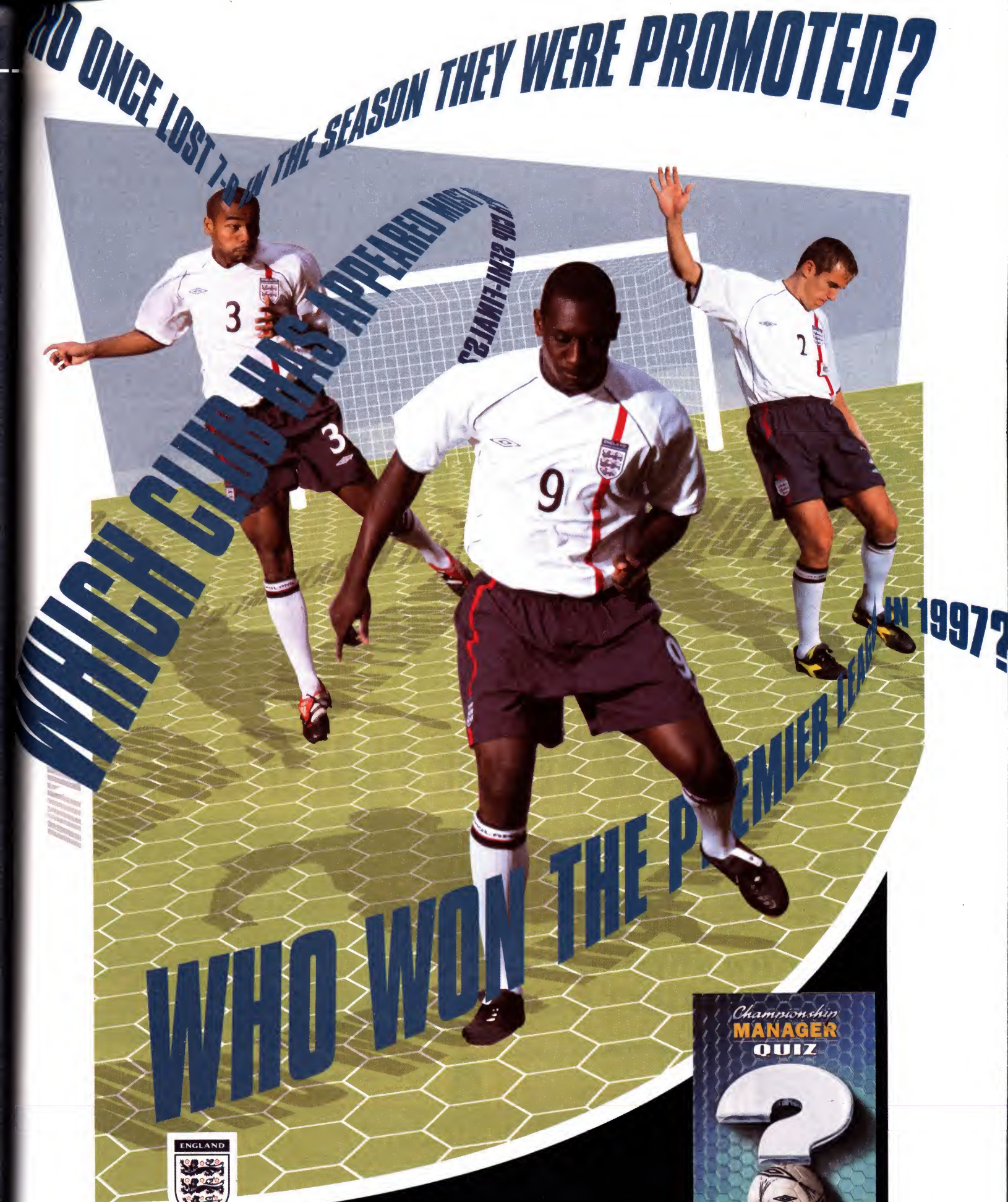
QUESTION: What's the name of the school attended by Harry Potter?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

- ✶ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- ✶ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- ✶ Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

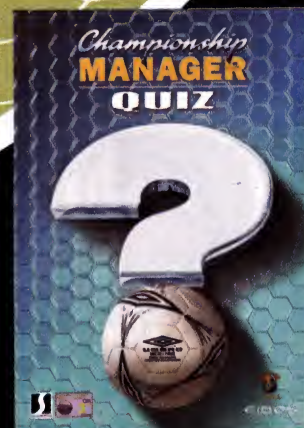
Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ1A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Jan 10 2001

- ✶ Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



"Official Interactive Partners
of the England Team"

How many will get past you?



PC CD-ROM



EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

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Ⓜ No, it's not *Serious Sam 2*, it's *Will Rock*.



Ⓜ And with less visual polish, but hopefully more depth of gameplay, *The Genome Project*.

Saber unsheathed

An unknown developer spills the beans on two new titles

Somewhat out of the blue, start-up New York-based developer Saber Interactive has unveiled its first two projects, both built on its capable Saber3D engine and both looking to be in quite an advanced state.

The first is *Will Rock*, a nice-looking FPS concerning the time-travelling and blood-letting exploits of videogames' newest ridiculously named icon, William Rockwell. Will was once an unassuming accountant and family man, until the day he ditched the nagging wife, the

life-sucking job and the double-fronted suburban dream home, loaded up on guns and went on a bloodthirsty treasure-hunting killing spree. We've played an early build of the game and at this stage all the signs are good, with familiar but solid gameplay ideals and some interesting level design, the final game promising to take us to ancient China, Greece and medieval Russia. The engine effortlessly knocks out visual effects like real-time lighting and shadows, pretty reflections and so on, and the whole thing comes off rather well. In fact it reminds

us quite a bit of *Serious Sam*, and there's a chance that it might just rock.

The second game in the works is *The Genome Project*, a third-person 3D action/adventure. Again, originality is not the game's strong suit, but visually it seems solid enough. Taking that much-loved gaming theme, genetic manipulation gone awry, the game puts you as a top secret military researcher, fighting off the monstrous creations of fiendish genetic scientists. In quite a cool twist, you'll be able to take samples of enemy DNA, do a bit of in-the-field splicing, and gain some of their special abilities by incorporating genes into your own make-up, each allowing you to solve new puzzles, progress to new areas, etc. Both these games could go either way at this stage, and we'll let you know when they do.

Saber Interactive • ETA TBC • www.saber3d.com

PLAY FOR FREE AT THE PLAYING FIELDS

**1 HOUR
FREE
WORTH £6**



The
**Playing Fields
DISCOUNT SLIP**

Name Date Of Birth

Address

Email Address

Tel No Date

★ This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between December 13 and January 9 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London W1. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of *PC ZONE*, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.



There's a bar to retire to when you get tired of fragging.

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*,

Sacrifice, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA GeForce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (to the left) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.



SOUNDS BELIEVABLE.

burp!



SOUNDS UNBELIEVABLE.
NEW SOUND BLASTER®

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QUALITY - POWER - CONNECTIVITY.



PC audio just evolved. The new Sound Blaster® Audigy™ family from Creative® has arrived. The new audio algorithms will take your gaming and music making to new levels of realism and performance. Quite simply, the Creative Sound Blaster Audigy family of soundcards are the highest quality and the most powerful available and come with superfast connectivity between PCs via the SB1394™. www.creativeaudigy.com



CREATIVE

EMULATION

ZONE

STUART CAMPBELL REPORTS
FROM A WORLD WHERE NO
PLATFORM IS OUT OF REACH

As you'll have seen if you read last month's letters pages or visited the PC ZONE online forum, Emu Zone has come under attack recently from some of PC ZONE's fine readership for its slack attitude to the evil software piracy going on in the guise of emulation, and the attendant deaths through starvation of countless thousands of impoverished software publishers. So to start this month's column off, we're going to talk about the emulation of a game that was actually free on its original release, in the hope that no one will blame Emulation Zone for the imminent collapse of Western society and all that we hold dear.

As it happens, almost no one in said Western society bought Sega's ill-starred Dreamcast console, and

A modern day classic arrives on PC, albeit rather indirectly.



that means that only a distressingly small number of people ever got to experience the joys of one of the first ever online console games, *Chu Chu Rocket!* (So named, incidentally, because the game stars a bunch of mice, and the Japanese equivalent of 'squeak' is 'chu'. So it's really called

'Squeak Squeak Rocket!' which may be the best name for a videogame ever. But anyway.)

Chu Chu Rocket! is a super-fast puzzle game with its roots in *Lemmings*. You have no direct control over the hordes of little furry mammals which populate the game and you have to guide them to

safety (a rocket) in a perilous environment (exploding space station full of cats). We don't have time to detail its finer points here, but suffice to say it's one of the most entertaining things you've ever played. Or rather, haven't played, since – as we've already established – you didn't buy a



Ⓜ Sometimes they do make them like they used to.

Dreamcast. But now, in a wholly predictable turnaround of fortune (what, you thought we were just shooting the breeze), you can. Because some people with clearly far too much time on their hands have just produced a more or less perfect replication of it. On the Atari ST.

The ST version of *Chu Chu Rocket!* plays, looks and (to a slightly lesser extent) sounds just like the real thing. It has the competitive modes, the puzzle modes, challenge modes, and everything else featured in the original. And while it's been primarily released for real ST owners to copy onto floppy disks and load into

their real STs, the magic of emulation means that you can, obviously, now play it on your PC. And as a bonus, you won't have the spectres of destitute former Eidos, EA and Infogrames executives shambling around in a Tesco car park swilling Special Brew on your consciences while you do it. Normal civilisation-debilitating service will be resumed (in a very big way, Neo Geo fans) next issue. Thank you.

LINKS

- ★ Steem (Atari ST emulator) <http://steem.atari.org/>
- ★ Reservoir Gods www.users.zetnet.co.uk/pinkpage/

VISUAL PINBALL TABLE OF THE MONTH

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

It's about time this table got a mention, because it probably did more to popularise Visual Pinball and Visual PinMAME than any other. When VP first came out, many people were rather underwhelmed by the uninspiring demo tables included with the original beta, and the potential which was promised seemed a rather distant prospect. But the release of *The Twilight Zone*, the first table to make use of the incorporation of PinMAME into the program, suddenly showed just what VP was capable of. Here, for the first time on a PC (and just about for the

first time ever, a couple of old NES games notwithstanding), was a real live pintable straight out of the arcades, that looked, sounded and acted like the real thing, and people were astounded.

Twilight Zone is also notable because it's pioneered so many of the innovations that even Visual Pinball author Randy Davis never envisaged, especially in the recreation of playfield 'toys'. The

table has been updated constantly since its first release, with every new version refining the blueprint further until it's practically indistinguishable from a photograph of the real thing. *Twilight Zone*, we salute you. With, er, these screenshots.

LINKS

- ★ Visual Pinball community hub www.vpforums.com



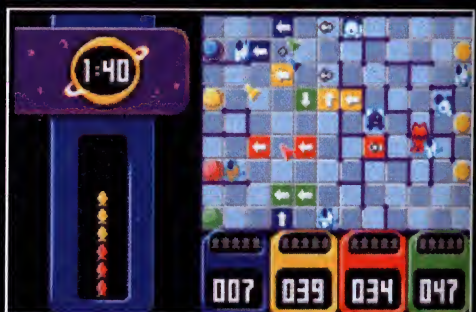
Ⓜ The first version of *Twilight Zone*. It's quite like the real thing...



Ⓜ ...but the latest version pretty much is the real thing.



Ⓜ Sega's finest vermin-based puzzler.



Ⓜ The game positively demands dirty tactics.

Opticians advise us to have regular eye tests
Dentists encourage us to look after our teeth
But, how many of us have regular hearing tests?

Listen Up!

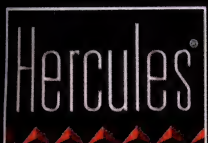
IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT MATTERS

The new Hercules range of sound cards offer amazing sound quality and cutting edge technology at very competitive prices. From the award winning **Game Theater XP**, the most cost effective and versatile sound card for hardcore gamers and home studio enthusiasts, to the **Muse XL**, the best value for money 4-channel PCI soundboard.

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The Man who KNOWS

STILL SOLDIERING ON

Eidos Interactive have been branded "sick bastards" after a tasteless marketing stunt backfired horribly, leaving thousands of innocent people traumatised. The unfortunate incident involved a spoof text message that was deliberately sent to owners of mobile telephones, urging them to: "Please report to your local army recruitment centre immediately for your 2nd tour of duty." Given the current political situation, some unwitting recipients misinterpreted it as a genuine call to arms, sparking panic on a scale not remotely comparable to Orson Welles' infamous *War Of The Worlds* broadcast. The message was no more than a jocular reminder of the availability of *Commandos 2* – as revealed later in the text – but a former member of the British Army complained to the Advertising Standards Authority, having been hoodwinked into believing he was being summoned to die in a foreign field. The ASA upheld the complaint, belching: "The Authority considered that at first glance the text message could distress recipients." Eidos was forced to sheepishly apologise for its gross insensitivity and said: "Unfortunately the text message was written many weeks before the horrific events of September 11. It was an oversight on our part that this message was then issued," a spokesman said. "It did the job though, you twats," he didn't add.

Meanwhile, boffins in California are secretly working on a chilling computer simulation of Osama bin Laden's brutal Al Qaeda terrorist network. Already dubbed *Sim Osama*, the virtual war game can recreate deserts, urban landscapes, communications networks, weapon systems, immigration patterns and an army of terrorists, the idea being to predict their murderous actions. Essentially a more sinister version of *The Sims*, the creator of that game, Will Wright, has mused: "Some of the best games have very, very simple rules, but amazingly elaborate strategies emerge that you can't predict." This was echoed by project leader, Michael Zyda, who murmured: "Interesting things happen, things you didn't expect." He also admitted that his first thought on hearing of the World Trade Center atrocity was: "How do we model this?" Nice guy.

Sports Interactive shit money, a report in *The Sunday Times* has revealed. The paper recently collated a list of Britain's 100 fastest growing technology companies, with the *Champ Man* developer emerging at a respectable 22, having increased sales by some 129% per year. An expert said: "With that sort of corn, you'd think they'd get themselves some decent clothes."

An ambitious new book is attempting to bring gaming to the masses. Traditionally more renowned for helping Libby and Cressida to find their way around Nicaragua while waiting for a cheque from their parents, the *Rough Guide* series has now embraced the interactive medium. Titled, naturally enough, *The Rough Guide To Videogaming*, it provides a roundup of the various platforms and genres. It also mentions some of the key specialist magazines, with *PC ZONE* described as having "Well-judged and generously illustrated reviews with a slightly 'New Lad' approach." New Lads? More like Bitter Men.

The Weird West

Pen and paper RPG *Deadlands* gets fleshed-out on the PC

Headfirst might not have tickled our fancy with *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* and they might still be smarting that after the panning we gave it the game was withdrawn from production, but just to prove we mean no harm we thought we'd pen a few words on its new *Deadlands* project.

Based on the pen and paper RPG of the same name, the game is a blend of Wild West and the supernatural, set as it is in an 'alternative past' in 1877 during the American Civil War. The alternative nature is provided through an earthquake that uncovers a brand new super-fuel (ghost rock), which is said to be more than 100 times more powerful than coal (which we're sure wouldn't have impressed the alternative 1877 version of Arthur Scargill) and able to power inventions that defy the laws of physics.

Unfortunately, a group of shadowy supernaturals called The Reckoners are also on the loose, and as per usual it's your job to rid the world of the evil presence. However, instead of using pen, paper and funny-shaped dice, the PC version gives you a game spliced with action and RPG elements, and environments that are shaped depending on your actions, good or bad, within the game. You'll also be able to go online to play co-operatively, join posses, enter duels or compete in team vs team levels. According to the developer it's also the first 'infinite' game, with an internal piece of AI code that's capable of writing you extra quests. We didn't have a problem with The Reckoners, but that last bit of information is tantamount to witchcraft.

Headfirst Productions • ETA: Q2 2003 • www.headfirst.co.uk



Avenging angel

The end of the world is nigh with *Psychotoxic: The 4th Horseman*

When it comes to the end of the world, at least the end of the world in a computer game, you can bet there's going to be a girl with big breasts present. In *Psychotoxic: The 4th Horseman* the girl in question is Angie Prophet, just your average New York goth who discovers she is the reincarnation of an ancient angel and the world's last hope when the four horseman of the

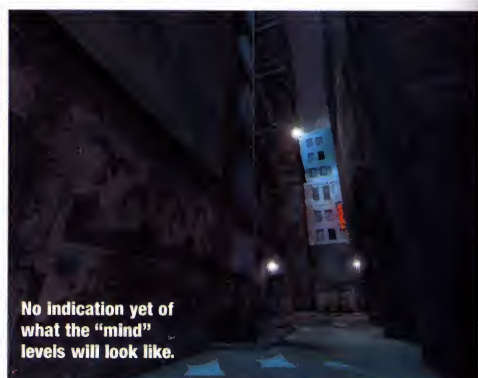
apocalypse turn up a little earlier than expected.

It's essentially an FPS, although it's likely to incorporate some action/adventure elements rather than being a hardcore shooter. Using the new Vulpine engine, *Psychotoxic* promises 15 'reality' levels set in a wrecked vision of the near future and a further seven 'mind' levels in which Angie enters other people's minds and battles their primal fears. The whole

thing looks to be shot through with an unashamedly cyberpunk styling.

The make-up of the heroine might be just a tad on the unreasonable side (come on guys, goth girls don't usually have enormous breasts) but the screenshots definitely hold promise, so lets hope the end of the world goes out with a bang rather than a whimper.

NuclearVision • ETA: Q4 2002 • www.psychotoxic.com





↑ The *Combat Mission* games have been created by a team of hardcore wargaming fanatics.

Combat Mission sequel

The *Combat Mission* phenomenon continues with *Barbarossa To Berlin*

As if marching to Berlin with *The Bitmap Brothers* wasn't enough for WWII fans (see story below), Big Time Software is aiming to make the same journey, instead taking a turn-based route via the Eastern Front.

Combat Mission: Barbarossa To Berlin is the sequel to the critically-acclaimed *Beyond Overlord*, a 3D turn-based squad-level strategy game that became something of a major hit, despite the fact it was only available to buy online. Put together by a group of dedicated wargamers fed up with their beloved genre being watered down for a mainstream

palate, the game combined highly detailed, sometimes crude graphics with unrivalled depth and realism. This made the game a favourite among armchair generals, and the sequel, this time covering the brutal war on the entire Eastern Front, is sure to follow suit. Again the game will only be available to buy via the Net, so don't go rushing down to your local games store demanding a copy come March as they won't know what the hell you're on about.

Big Time Software • ETA March 2002 • www.battlefront.com

LAN POWER

Prefer live targets to fragging on the Net? Steve 'Scalper' Randall is here to help

As LAN parties become more commonplace, the number of gamers appearing, blinking into the daylight, is on the increase. Sometimes their legs start to buckle as they struggle under the weight of their monitors, but the inconvenience of unplugging your set-up and hoofing it around the country is more than rewarded by two or three days of pure gaming with like-minded individuals. So if you fancy the idea of a gaming getaway to celebrate the festive season, see if any of these are near you.

★ I figured that with Christmas looming, people could be going abroad. If you're in New York on the December 15 you can go to Brooklyn for a 12-hour session starting at 1700. Machines can be hired, which means all you have to worry about is getting there. For details go to www.nikeatronik.com.

★ The Leicester networking games club has been going for 15 years and will be coming together on December 15 from noon-midnight. Costs are minimal but for more details try www.gdbok.co.uk and hit on the LNGC link.

★ Next year starts early in Aldershot for the Shotgun LAN crew. They're starting at 10pm on January 4 and going through until 5pm on January 6. A bouncy castle should be on site and so can you be for just £15. Details at www.shotgunlan.com.

★ Later in the month from January 18-20 the Warlanned crew are hosting a party in Birmingham – for all you C&C nuts, these guys take it to a new level. Find out by going to www.warlanned.com or simply go along for £25.

★ No Hallowed Ground LAN this month as we are busy trying to organise a BIG LAN for the summer, for details and your input go to www.HGLAN.co.uk.



Real soldiers

Bitmaps unveil *World War II: D-Day To Berlin*

Future sports, mythical platform adventures, strategy games starring hapless robot misfits... The Bitmap Brothers have always found their off-the-wall ideas from their imagination rather than a history book. However, their next game features real rather than steel soldiers, fighting across the war-torn fields

of Western Europe. It looks like they're into gritty realism as much as the rest of us.

Pitched as an action strategy game, *WWII: D-Day To Berlin* will offer nearly 30 single-player missions, starting, of course, on the beaches of Normandy and concluding among the burning rubble of Berlin – in which case we would assume

you get to command Russian forces, seeing as they got there first.

We don't have much information on the game at the moment, but Codemasters was obviously impressed enough to snap the game up, and as it's only been a year since *Z: Steel Soldiers*, it's certain to be based on the same 3D engine. That being the case,

expect a full 3D action-focused game, stripped of resource management. And if *Steel Soldiers* is anything to go by, the interface is bound to be great.

Bitmap Brothers • ETA Autumn 2002
• www.bitmap-brothers.com

MAILBOX



Feel the need for a rant? Then grab a pen, write it down and put it in the postbox addressed to us. If it's interesting enough we'll print it

★ ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

OPERATION ANGRY

I'm writing, perhaps in a bitter state of mind, about *Operation Flashpoint: Gold Edition*. I say bitter because I bought the game when it was originally published. As we all know, in its first incarnation it was a bit of a touchy sod at the best of times. While playable it was quite visibly dogged by various bugs, including the disastrous multiplayer part of the game. You could get an online game that didn't crash, or go out of sync once in three hours. If you were lucky.

Codemasters, supposed 'Genius At Play' is now releasing the product as it should have been originally. Fully patched, and with an add-on campaign, and Prima's strategy guide. Do these people think the public are a bunch of suckers? I find it hard to believe they expect us to buy the game again, when clearly they should be giving all previous purchasers this 'Gold Edition'. To try and mask it with an add-on, and some five-quad strategy guide is an utter disgrace.

As I mentioned previously, perhaps Codemasters could, for a minor fee, exchange all our pre-tested *Operation Flashpoints* with the final, bug-free (I hope) *Gold Edition*.

'Genius At Play'? More like 'Money-grabbing corporate marketing men at play'.

Andy Kimberley

★ To be fair, you can buy the add-on pack on its own for an extremely generous £9.99, which is about half the price of most other expansions, plus all the patches have been on our cover CDs.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

After just finishing off two of the titles in my collection (which doesn't happen often – I envisage plodding away at *Baldur's Gate II* when my grandchildren arrive), I found myself in the enviable position



★ If you're an *Operation Flashpoint* fan watch out for the *Gold Edition* add-on for £9.99.

of picking a new game. Fancying a change, I opted for a strategy title, and like a kid in a sweet shop started gleefully playing through all the RTS demos on a year's worth of PCZ cover discs.

Conclusion: the genre is falling foul of the trade descriptions act. 'Real time' it may be, but strategy it most certainly ain't. Gathering resource A, to build unit B to overrun enemy C actually requires about the same strategic acumen as a bunch of thugs getting together to beat up a granny.

Watching all those oversized units pillaging Lego houses hardly adds to a sense of realism (does it remind anyone else of the Stonehenge scene in the *Spinal Tap* movie?). Even games which promise to offer something more, like *Z: Steel Soldiers* and *Cossacks*, are carved very much from the same block: capturing and defending territory in *Z* is just another form of resource management and the fancy formations in *Cossacks* are so cumbersome

you're still best off amassing lots of your best units and trying to catch the enemy sleeping. Success is still guaranteed anyway by following the ten-year-old ABC formula above.

To whit, a few months back you separated god games from strategy games in your Top 100 – might I suggest you do the same with genuine

It will have scenarios, cheats, downloads, and even a League/Ladder system for GB players. You can find it at www.galacticbattlegrounds.co.uk.

GB Team

OOPS

I recently received issue #110 and noticed the 'Great Buy' in your Buyer's Guide section,

“Do these people think the public are a bunch of suckers? I find it hard to believe they expect us to buy the game again”

ANDY KIMBERLEY ON CODEMASTERS AND FLASHPOINT

strategy games (e.g. *Gettysburg* and *Shogun*, which do require some military savvy) from resource management 'games' (e.g. the rest of the formulaic dross which doesn't).

Brian Pickavance

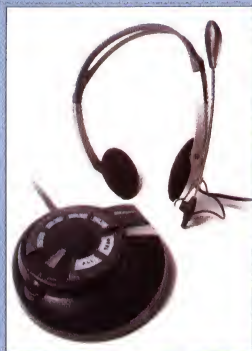
GALACTIC CYBERGROUND

Love the mag and the new-look website. Is there any chance you could mention my website for the new *Star Wars* game *Galactic Battlegrounds*?

namely the AMD Athlon 1.4GHZ listed at just £69 from Dabs.com. After reading this I rushed along to Dabs, only to find they were selling it at £121.02. Hardly a bargain at that price, is it?

Therefore, I would like to know when this price is effective from. Maybe you guys know something that us mere grunts don't. I look forward to hearing your reply soon – as I am in the market for a new processor (and the

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON



PC ZONE is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're priced at £49.99 each and are worth every single penny.

rest) right now – and wouldn't like to miss out on such a good offer.

Andy Inglis

★ We owe Andy (and a few other readers) an apology as somehow we managed to put the wrong budget processor in the buyer's guide last month. We've rectified it now, but the bad news is that you can't get the 1.4Ghz Athlon for £69, although maybe this time next year...

TOILET HUMOUR

I've got a cautionary tale to tell, and it isn't pretty. I'm a big ZONE fan (I've never subscribed but I've bought every issue for about three years and trusted pretty much every review you've ever printed, with the exception of *Black & White*!). However, about six months back I got an ADSL line installed, and seeing as I had 24/7 Internet access I thought I could do without the magazine, saving myself £3.99 each month, and getting all my gaming news from the Net.

Unfortunately my plan backfired. To start with I went on the back of several enthusiastic *Red Faction* reviews on the Internet and bought myself a copy, thus effectively burning £29.99. To make matters worse, I found myself with nothing to read on the toilet, and on one occasion I actually studied an electricity bill that had just been delivered, even reading the 'How to Pay' section on the back. So now I'm back and I'm happy again. I just hope you're not too angry with me.

Steve Wilson

BETTER LATE...

I'm a subscriber to PC ZONE, and as a big PC user am getting fed up with consoles taking priority. I'm not talking about which platform is best, but that more and more games are getting released on console first and then being released on PC at a much later date – or not at all. A great example of this is *Grand Theft Auto III*, which is out on PlayStation 2 now but not on PC until spring at the earliest.

I can guess why this is happening, with companies like Sony most likely 'slipping' the developers a large cheque, in a bid to force PC owners to buy a console. Of course there

are porting issues, but surely the game was being designed for both PC and PS2 when it was in production?

So what's the solution? If I want to play *GTAIII* before Christmas I have to buy a PlayStation 2. If I want to play *Halo* (which was in fact originally a PC game) I've got to wait for the Xbox. Are consoles taking over the world? Will we all be forced into buying them? Oh well, at least we got *Half-Life* first.

Paul J

★ The PC provides a huge market for developers, but there's no single hardware manufacturer behind us willing to pay millions of dollars to ensure a PC exclusive. Looking on the bright side, the PC still gets most of the best games in the world first, and both *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Halo* are good enough to wait for. Check out our Most Wanted 2002 previews for the latest information and screenshots.

WARZONE

I buy your magazine to read reviews on games, not to listen to political ramblings from supposedly unbiased reviewers. What am I talking

about? Mark Hill's review of *Ghost Recon* on the day it came out based on Mark Hill's recommendation, and I do agree with just about everything that he says in the review. Aside from the anti-war invective of course. So Mark, a word of advice: stick to what you know best, namely, reviewing games, and

was impossible to review a game like *Ghost Recon*, about US soldiers intervening in a foreign country, without putting it in the context of the bombing of Afghanistan. Reviewing games is still a matter of exposing one's own personal opinion (although those who write in to tell us how we 'got it wrong' may think it should be some kind of

WORLD GONE WRONG

Just a quick question: are the people who play online role-playing games serious, or is it all just one big laugh? Every time I see screenshots in your magazine, there's some strange-looking bloke with a hat and a beard called something like Lord Rhinestone Cowboy VI, killing pixillated rats in a barren landscape. Am I missing something? Someone I know

“Just a quick question: are the people who play online role-playing games serious, or is it all just one big laugh?”

P BLACK THINKS THEY'RE ALL WEIRDOS

mathematical equation with no room for subjectivity), and my personal experience of playing the game was influenced by my feelings on the real-world events. We may reject outright that games influence people

towards violence, but that doesn't mean we should ignore their social significance.”

that plays *Asheron's Call* says that it's a great way to meet new friends. I don't know about you, but if I wanted to meet weirdos I'd save myself a £10 subscription every month and hang around Leicester Square for a few weeks.

P Black

★ Oh they're deadly serious. And to prove it you can take a look at the screenshots for the new *EverQuest* add-on, *Shadows Of Luclin*, on page 85. Or wait for our Getting

Started guide to *EverQuest* next month, which we're running in conjunction with the full *EverQuest* software on our cover disc. [W]



① What do you mean you can't understand games like *EverQuest*?



about? Mark Hill's review of *Ghost Recon* where, instead of telling us about the game, he decided to highlight US actions that have gone wrong in Afghanistan. I'm not the sort of person who defends the US blind, but in my opinion the military has gone all-out to avoid civilian casualties and they should be supported by anyone in the West interested in democracy.

To be fair, I did actually

let the politicians sort out the troubles elsewhere.

Darren Johnson

★ Over to Mark: “It



② *Halo*: It is coming to PC. Just not this Christmas. Cheers Bill.



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This Christmas prepare to Return to Castle Wolfenstein.



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Believe your eyes, it's...

UNREAL II

Martin Korda finds out that Legend Entertainment's upcoming FPS really is looking like the real deal

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Legend Entertainment
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.legendent.com
OUT Mid 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Just look at it. It's the most stunning-looking shooter ever.
- Looks like being the first ground-breaking FPS since *Half-Life*.
- Interactive storyline.
- 18 weapons.
- Stunningly realistic AI.

I'd finally made it. Stepping out into the seemingly searing sunlight, I took in my surroundings with twitching, deep-sunk eyes, coloured with the red-veined signs of sleep deprivation. I was here in Washington DC, adopted capital of the Weener and home of Legend Entertainment to do a job, and regardless of the lack of shuteye, I was going to see it through.

For the past seven hours I'd been wedged into a minuscule seat the size of a pram, next to a Howard Stern lookalike with a propensity of sniffing more vigorously than a speed addict with a bag full of gear. Unsteadily, but determinedly, I dragged myself through the airport, feet bursting through size tens – swollen from hours of inactivity – desperately, if futilely, trying to convince myself that I wasn't about to suffer a fatal onset of deep vein thrombosis. Surely, it couldn't end like this...

Consoling myself with the knowledge that I'd soon be playing the game that could

well rewrite the FPS rulebook, I climbed into a rickety heap of metal posing as a cab. During the clattering and insanely overpriced drive – made all the worse by banal comments such as, "Ing-ger-laynd? That'll be that little place in Eurowp?" – I came to the smug conclusion that, if nothing else, at least I'd die a happy man once I'd done what I'd come to do.

Polite conversation was, understandably, the furthest thing from my mind as I staggered through the doors of the building which houses Legend. Immediately I was assured that Mike Verdu, head of Legend Entertainment and the man I'd come to see, would be along shortly. It was obviously a means of torture, a cunning ruse to make me suffer by prolonging my wait for the potential masterpiece I'd travelled so far to see. About a minute later he arrived. Smile on face and hand outstretched, he motioned for me to follow. The doors swung open, a fanfare boomed out around us as we walked into the games room, the doors swung shut and we were ready to begin our journey.

COMPOSURE IS A VIRTUE

To attempt to describe *Unreal II* in the usual hyperbole-laced, superlative-ridden manner would, ultimately, fail to do it total justice. It really is looking *that* ground-breaking. Remember the first time you fired up *Half-Life*, wandered through the corridors a bit, and found yourself overwhelmed by just how much better it was than every other FPS out there? Well that's exactly what happened to me with *Unreal II*.

But before we start proper like, let's get the pretty pictures out of the way



Quick, look heroic, they're taking a screenshot.



Now that's what I call evolution.





Sensitive bucked toothed male seeks female for friendship, maybe more.

first, and stop you gawping at them instead of reading. Bit good, aren't they? In fact, it was at least a minute before I could pull my bloodshot eyeballs away from the images of the alien world before me, which was teeming with ambient life. A running brook lapped against flowing grass, stretching out to unfamiliar but breathtaking vistas. Mike finally and thankfully broke the silence, and summed up my feelings far more eloquently than I could in my weakened state in the process. "The new technology brings the

"It was at least a minute before I could pull my eyeballs away from the images of the alien world before me"

worlds, characters, and creatures to life and the outdoor landscapes generated by the terrain system look amazingly realistic. Particle effects create the illusion of running water, blazing fire, drifting smoke, breaking glass, advanced weather effects, and even flowing hair. Humans and creatures become believable as head tracking, eye movement, and facial expressions turn them into real characters instead of the stiff puppets that traditionally populate 3D games."

As if needing to prove it to me, he instantly transported us to a part of the game with lifeforms. It was true.

All of it. As he walked from side to side, they followed us with their eyes, a look of mirth hanging from their pig-ugly alien mugs, as a light rain began watering the swaying foliage around us. That was it, I was convinced. I stood up to leave, but was politely told to sit down as the demonstration had only just started. Ungrudgingly, I obliged.

So how many levels like this will there be, I blithered in a panicked state as I desperately tried to buy time to compose myself? "There are actually about 35-40 levels, which are

organised into 13 combat missions. The game is set in ten different planetary environments, ten different unique sets of architecture, terrain, and textures and interactive environments, although you won't be able to blow huge holes in every hill or building that you see. The technology isn't quite there yet. Keep in mind that even games that claim to have supposedly modifiable worlds have only implemented this ability in a very limited way." Sipping an overly weak and sickeningly sweet cup of coffee which had somehow manifested itself on the desk, I felt a sudden urge to



Yes, I'd love to see your etchings.

push Mike off his chair, grab the machine, kick down all the doors and conduct a heroic sprint to the seclusion of my hotel, where I could draw the curtains and play the game till I'd satisfied my game-lust. Thankfully, I resisted. Just.

BLOWN AWAY

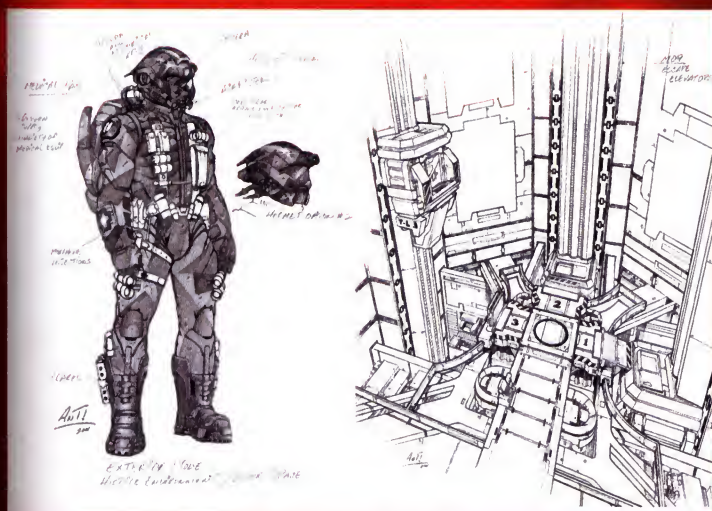
"How about we get some action going?" asked Mike enthusiastically, and, preempting my answer, started loading up a battle scenario. "Yes, yes definitely...", came my involuntarily high-pitched squeal of a response. Had it really

come to this? I was, to my perennial shame, slowly degenerating into a gibberingly stereotypical games journalist... over a computer game. It was at this point I promised myself that I'd kill myself if I uttered a single exclamation of "Awesome!", "Cool!", "Go on man, blow his head off!", "Yeah!", or any combination of the four during the course of the demo. Which seemed to work.

The level kicks in. Spotting a group of enemies in the near distance, Mike unholsters a high-rate firing machine gun. He tries to flank them, but they



There'll be 18 weapon types to miss your opponents with.



spot him. Two of them dive for cover, laying down suppressive fire for their frantically strafing comrades who are caught in the open. A bloody firefight ensues and it's not long before Mike has been hacked down by these stunningly intelligent enemies. "Most of the AI work we're doing is in creating cool behaviours for the creatures and characters in the single-player game," he explains. "We want AI that reacts to danger, employs some elements of squad behaviour cooperation with allies, follows player orders, and is able to intelligently use the new weapons and capabilities that we're building into the game. Enemies use their new AI to find cover during firefights, work together in teams, react believably to threats, and present a serious challenge to the player. Bot AI for deathmatch and CTF will be incrementally refined from *UT*, but the big improvements will be seen in the single-player

experience." From the looks of things, they're well on track. Having already seen the enormous and terrifying looking Skaarj (the only race to return from the original *Unreal*), I pressed Mike for information about what other races we can expect to come up against in the finished version. "There are a lot of human and humanoid enemies including several classes of soldiers, mercenaries, and of course the Skaarj. Then there are some truly strange

"Legend is on the verge of providing the most lifelike, realistic, and challenging AI ever seen in a game"

enemies, like the water-dwelling Xian (pronounced Shian), and the menacing robotic Drakk. The human and humanoid enemies are somewhat like the bots in *UT*, except they come in different classes – three classes total: light and fast scouts, medium combat soldiers, and the massively armoured

and lethally armed heavy class. Humans and humanoids are highly intelligent opponents that can use cover effectively and work together as a team."

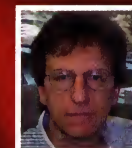
He's not wrong. Having always been impressed by *UT*'s uncannily lifelike opponents, I'd always harboured the hope that we'd see the AI manifest in a single-player FPS. However, Legend has not only fulfilled this dream, but taken it to the next stage, and, with some more tweaking, is on the verge of providing the most lifelike, realistic, and challenging AI ever seen in a game to date. I pressed Mike to tell me more about these new enemies. "There'll be a spider-like race called the Araknids which will attack in swarms. Araknids come in many sizes, with the smallest being simple cannon fodder and the biggest being more intelligent, more heavily armoured, and able to use some very odd and dangerous new ranged weapons." Yes, he did show them in action, and yes, arachnophobes will be crawling up the walls in disarrayed panic when they get a glimpse of this lot. Obliging, Mike went on to show me some other races in action, including the Izarians – hair-covered six-limbed beasts which hunt in packs and are armed to the teeth.

Then, jumping to an underwater location, he mocked up a battle against the Xian who fired devastating subsonic pulse weapons at us. "The Xian will be able to communicate telepathically," beamed Mike. So how many opponents will there be? "More than 24 in total," came the

reply. Coo. Finally, the moment I'd been waiting for had arrived. Mike passed over the controls to me and urged me to have a go. Like a terrified

Q&A

MIKE VERDU



We asked Mike Verdu to tell us a bit more about... Mike Verdu.

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?

MIKE I played one of the first *Pong* units from Atari – it was a table-top model in a restaurant. That was a very long time ago. The very first computer game I played was a text-based game called *Jovian Invaders* on the TRS-80.

PCZ What was the first game to change your life?

MIKE *Star Raiders* on the Atari 800 or maybe *Nethack* – both of those games really opened my eyes to the possibilities of the medium.

PCZ What game are you jealous of, that you wished you had conceived/worked on, but didn't?

MIKE The original *Team Fortress*. They got a lot of things right in early team-based multiplayer.

PCZ What is the best thing about *Unreal II*?

MIKE This game is all about variety. In one mission you might be blowing away swarms of creatures in a fast-paced, visceral, but relatively mindless search and destroy sortie – and in the next mission you'll be commanding a team of soldiers in an assault on a base. We hope to surprise and delight gamers with the different experiences they'll encounter.



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

During a short interlude in the demonstration, I grilled Mike about what we can expect from the multiplayer side of the game and his hopes for the potential of a mod-making community.

Aside from deathmatch and team deathmatch, what multiplayer modes are planned and will we see the return of some favourite Unreal/UTDM levels?

We aren't bringing back *Unreal* or *UT* levels, but we are introducing new multiplayer game modes. The new expanded multiplayer game mixes action and strategy. Player teams will fight for control of planet surfaces and alien artifacts using nanotechnology replicators to build ever more sophisticated weapons, automated gun turrets, force fields, sensors, recon and repair robots, and other cool stuff. Players will choose one of three player classes at the beginning of play – class selection establishes a balance of speed, special abilities, armour, and firepower. All races, abilities, weapons, equipment, and tactics will have precedents in the single-player game – but the expanded multiplayer experience brings everything together at the same time.

The artifacts you get in the single-player game become the object of our new multiplayer mode – each team starts with a number of these artifacts and has as their objective capturing the artifacts belonging to the opposing team. The artifacts function like relics in some of the

mods and multiplayer modes introduced by other games – they give their holders some powers they otherwise wouldn't have. The trade-off is that players who carry the artifacts in order to use them in combat are also making the artifacts vulnerable. If you get killed far from your base while carrying an artifact, you've essentially handed your opposing team the equivalent of a flag.

Will the game ship with the new Unreal Editor?

Yes indeed.

How important is third-party development to you as the creators of Unreal II? Have any of them had any input into the development of Unreal II?

We are keeping the same community-friendly orientation that Epic had for *UT*, and we look forward to working with mod authors and level designers as they extend the game, but we aren't soliciting direct help from third-party mod-authors. We want to make sure we include the things that are necessary to let them shine once they have a chance to do their own thing with the game after release. I really do think their role is to expand and extend the game that we create once it hits the market.



Expect the multiplayer action to be red hot.

LOST THE PLOT?

What's the game all about? Here's where you can find out.

Set in a distant and alien ridden part of 24th century space, you play a Terran Colonial Authority Frontier Marshall or TCAFM for short. Human colonies have sprung up around the galaxy and you're in charge of keeping law and order in one of them. Your base is a ship called the Atlantis, where you and your team of three crewmates (who can be interacted with as means of furthering the plot and character development) run operations from. Ne'Ban is your trusty pilot, Isaak is an engineer who keeps the ship intact, and Aida is your Intelligence officer. Your jobs are unfortunately made much more complicated by the fact that there are five alien races embroiled in war over a bunch of alien artifacts. It's your job to fight for the safety and survival of the colonists, uncover the secrets of the mysterious artifacts and bring an end to the war. Simple really.



Try using a rod.

virgin reaching for his first breast, I clutched the controls with overawed wonderment. Soon I was battling the very creatures we'd just been speaking about. They dodged, weaved, took cover and generally annihilated me. Look, I was bloody tired OK? Right...

OVERWHELMED

At this point, I was suddenly struck by a terrifying realisation. How could one man, one single, solitary man, with just a collection of weapons, hope to succeed in missions against such insurmountable odds? Mike's answer was both relieving and enlightening: "Teamwork, stealth and heavy weaponry." Eager to hear more, I urged him to elaborate. "Each mission will feature a different tactical situation, including hostage rescue, civilian escort, assault on an enemy base with a squad of friendly troops where you give orders to your soldiers, defence of a structure or area against attacking enemy waves, stealth infiltration and reconnaissance forays into enemy bases, ships, or terrain, or more traditional search and destroy sorties. We also want to have some levels where it's just a joy to use powerful weapons to take on hordes of cool enemies. These pure FPS experiences will balance out other levels that have sophisticated tactical scenarios and very rich gameplay, a mix of combat, scripted sequences, interaction with characters, and solving a few puzzles that go beyond pulling levers."

SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Unreal II is clearly shaping up to be much more than your average alien shoot-fest, a fact made all the clearer by Legends' insistence on having a compelling, open-ended storyline backing up the mayhem. The inevitable conversation ensues over *Half-Life*, and how *Unreal II* will not only improve upon its formula, but take it in directions FPS fans have been dreaming about for years. Mike is at his most animated when talking



LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT

Founded in 1989, Legend Entertainment has produced 19 games to date, their last two are still being played regularly.

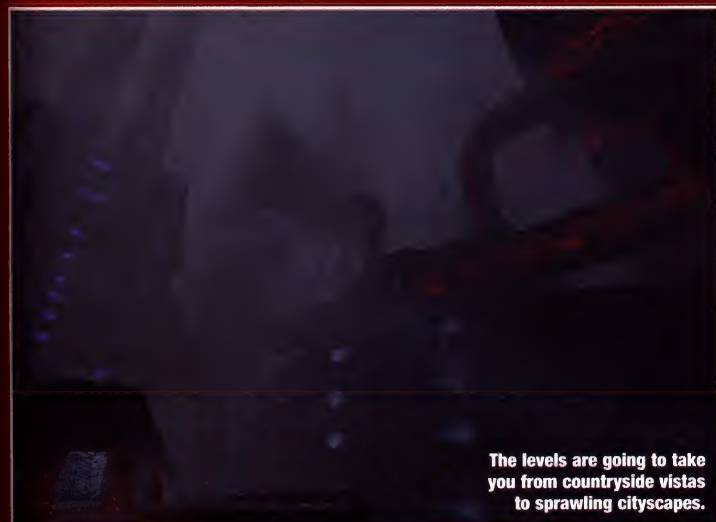
1999 *Wheel of Time*: An ambitious FPS based on Robert Jordan's best selling series of fantasy novels and utilising the Unreal engine. With a solid storyline, 3D action, strategy and even some role-playing elements, it was a brave attempt to do something a little different, but failed to capture the gaming public's imagination.

1998 *Unreal Mission Pack #1: Return To Na Pali*: Solid add on to Epic's sci-fi FPS.

on this subject, swatting the air with wildly gesticulating hands. He only just misses twatting me round the nose with a particularly nasty-looking hooking slap-like movement. "We've developed a scripting system for our NPCs that allows us to do some spectacular in-game sequences," he says. "We've also created a new dialogue system that allows you to converse with NPCs in real-time. This enables us to add depth to our story in a way that *Half-Life* couldn't. Which isn't to say we're going to go as deep as *Deus Ex* did, because we know that we're working on a fast-paced action game, not an RPG, but we can have an extra dimension with dialogue. We're using the dialogue system to help tell the story in combination with scripted sequences and to improve upon the method for giving commands and responses to bots and team-mates pioneered in *UT*. Unlike the dialog systems in many other games, the action doesn't stop when you enter into a conversation. Choices are overlaid on the HUD and the pace of the dialogue is fairly rapid. It also makes for a good way to give orders to your bot squad-mates and



Look at the textures on that.



The levels are going to take you from countryside vistas to sprawling cityscapes.

communicate with team-mates in multiplayer." I then asked Mike whether he was worried that *Unreal II* might come too late in the day to really take the FPS genre by storm. After all, before its release, the likes of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, *Medal Of Honor* and, maybe, *Duke Nukem Forever* will already be on the shelves. Just how well will *Unreal II* stand up against the competition? "I think it will stand up very well," says Mike, confidently. "Our game will look great because it is truly next generation – in all likelihood, *Unreal II* will be one of the first games on the market that truly takes advantage of next-generation

hardware on a PC using hardware transform and lighting – or hardware T&L – on cards like the GeForce 2. I am also confident the gameplay will be great. The new game design innovations and the story for *Unreal II* add to a solid foundation created by *UT* and the original *Unreal*." Hard to argue with that really.

GUNNING FOR THE TOP

Which leaves only one major subject uncovered in my array of FPS questions, garnered from years of mindless mouse-fiddling (and of course from playing FPSs)... hardware. And, as if you couldn't

have guessed, Mike was already busy gathering a supply of weaponry which would make even the most demanding of fascist dictators smile. There will be 18 – yes, count them, 18 – weapon types for you to vaporise, maim, injure or miss your enemies with. "The original *Unreal* was known for its innovative weapon design – but also got some criticism because virtually all the weapons were unfamiliar to FPS players," explains Mike. "We have a balance between weapons that should be easily recognisable to fans of the genre and our own cool new weapon designs." These include the obligatory pistol, shotgun, rocket launcher, sniper rifle, hi-rate fire machine-gun and the stunning-looking flame-thrower, which belches out flames so realistic you feel obliged to clench your cheeks. And yes, just in case you're wondering, it does look better than the one you're currently playing around with in *Wolfenstein*. Then there are the more

any vehicles for you to drive. "Vehicles really have to be designed in from the beginning because they change the way the game is played, and we made a decision not to include them in *Unreal II*. We wanted our levels to be 'human scale' – so that the player (or players in a multiplayer game) could traverse them on foot. If you introduce vehicles, you wind up with large, sprawling levels that feel great for driving around but not so good for walking. We wanted much tighter spaces," he explained. Given the quality of the gameplay, believe me, this really isn't a problem and, if anything, it's a relief as it won't detract from the stunning atmosphere and sense of immersion.

After spouting a stream of thanks to everyone and randomly spewing out phrases like, "Ground-breaking, totally ground-breaking," while slapping passing strangers on the back and grinning idiotically from the high I

“Unreal II will not only improve upon *Half-Life*'s formula, but take it in directions FPS fans dream about”

exotic killing machines, such as a biomechanical leech gun, which transfers health from your enemies to you, robotic killer hunter drones and an assortment of energy weapons that Mike is reluctant to talk about yet. Which is a shame. Mike also confirmed that there wouldn't be

was still on, I made my way out of the building and into a waiting cab which had been ordered for me. As we trundled to my hotel, fatigue dug into my haggard body, and with me fading away into a delirium-fuelled slumber, I knew I'd never look at another FPS in the same way ever again. [E]

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

Another year in the unrivalled reign of PC gaming is upon us, and like all before it, 2002 promises to be the best the PC has seen in its 20-year history. You've seen *Unreal 2*, now join the **PC ZONE** crew as we take a look at the rest of the games coming our way this year, from the almost-done *Mafia* to the 'done when it's done' *Duke Nukem Forever*

2001 was a good year for games, despite the fact there was no RPG to rival *Deus Ex*, no *Half-Life*-shattering shooter, nor a strategy game to wipe *Shogun* from the field of battle. But these games will fall before too long, if not at the hands of sequels, then certainly by other contenders. And mark our words, as 2001 was a good year in gaming, so 2002 will be a vintage one, whether your tippie be role-playing, action or strategy. The games that will set new standards are those

that are on the way, most – if not all – are featured across the next 20 or so pages. We've missed a few, certainly. There are no dedicated online games featured for instance (expect a special feature in a forthcoming Online Zone). Some games are just rumours, others announced but clouded in secrecy. What we've done is simply cast our net wide across a boiling sea of great-looking games, picking out the ones bobbing on the surface just waiting to be caught; the biggest and the most interesting of which we've followed up, the rest cast aside. We could have picked from

100 games and made up stories about *Doom III*, *Elite IV* or *Sam & Max 2* to fill space, but instead we've kept it real. These are the facts, pure and simple, straight from the developers themselves, along with as many new screenshots as we could muster. You will see that unlike the past 12 months, 2002 *will* bring an RPG to rival *Deus Ex*, a shooter to kill off *Half-Life* and a strategy game to send *Shogun* packing. More than that, we can expect the entire landscape of PC gaming to change for the better. It's going to be a big, big year. Stick around.

● PCZONE ● MOST WANTED 2002



← HALO

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bungie
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
TBC
2002

IT'S NO EXAGGERATION TO say this game has been on top of more most-wanted lists than any other game over the last two years. Beautiful graphics, usable vehicles, indoor and outdoor action, incredible artwork, amazing sound and music, all of this and more represent what could be the most thrilling futuristic first-person shooter the PC has ever seen. The good news is it's complete and already shipping. The bad news is it went to Xbox first. Now we can't

claim to have magically gotten our hands on the secret PC version, but we have played the Xbox game, which is absolutely stunning, even though we had to risk RSI to master the ridiculous gamepad. Needless to say if it wasn't for the PC version and the promise of even better graphics and superior multiplayer options, we'd almost recommend importing a US Xbox to play it. As to a PC release date it would be unrealistic to suggest the game will be on the shelves before the

summer, even though the PC version was finished (so rumour goes) before the console version. Our guess is that Halo PC will be out next Autumn, probably to coincide with the announcement of Halo 2, which is already being worked on and a cert to arrive on Xbox first. We'll bring you more concrete news on the new features you can expect to see in the PC version as it's available.



Whatever happened to...



Halo: Xbox only, but not for long, we hope.

PRAETORIANS

“The player will have the chance to drive fortress sieges using a variety of war machines”

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Pyro Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.eidos.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
Spring
2002

“PRAETORIANS WILL SET A new benchmark in strategy-based PC games,” claims Nick Earl, VP for development for Eidos US. Like we've never heard that one before, but in the case of Pyro Studios' *Praetorians*, we're inclined to think he might have a point. This 3D RTS title from the makers of the *Commandos* series focuses on the political machinations of the emerging

Roman Empire, and players will get the opportunity to command the forces of not only the Romans, but also the religiously fanatical Egyptians and the ferocious Gauls.

What immediately sets *Praetorians* apart from the bulk of RTS titles, is that in the 'to dig or not to dig' dilemma, the game has gone for the lesser 'not to dig' option with a distinct lack of any resource management. Instead, like *Shogun*, it's played purely as a tactical war sim.

Then there are fortress sieges and assaults. That's a whole new area of gameplay that's only starting to be

touched by recent RTS games. The fortresses in *Praetorians* are huge and intimidating, but in gameplay terms the real innovation is to turn fortress walls into actual battlefields. Deploying your forces from an assault tower is quite a sight, as is seeing your tower crumble to ashes under the flames of defenders's fire arrows.

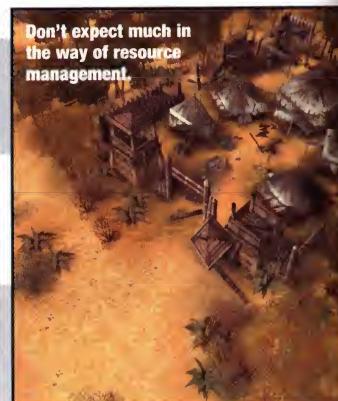
In the battle of the RTSs next year, *Praetorians* is undoubtedly bringing up the 'Shogun with Romans' side and it looks as though it will be taking *Age Of Mythology* on in a head-to-head battle for the hearts and minds of strategy enthusiasts everywhere.



The AI will understand terrain and its defensive and offensive possibilities.



Terrain will also affect unit viability.



Don't expect much in the way of resource management.



WARCRAFT III



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Blizzard
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE
www.blizzard.com/war3/

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**Summer
2002**



IF YOU WERE TO MAKE A

wish list for *WarCraft III*, it's a pretty safe bet that a brand new 3D engine would be right at the top of it. Blizzard is well aware of this and has been busy creating its own 3D engine to give its fledgling fantasy RTS a new breath of life, and bloody good it looks too from what we've seen. We tracked down Blizzard's Bill Roper to find out what progress they're making with what is set to be one of the biggest releases of the year.

"We are very excited over the progress of *WarCraft III*, especially in regard to how different it is from the other real-time strategy games we have played or created," claims Bill. He continues: "The focus on controlling fewer units but managing the strategic elements of the battle makes for a truer test of skill among our best players. At the same time, it adds a level of personality and familiarity

with every unit in the game that is appealing to people who have not played strategy games."

That may be, but with countless fantasy RTS titles dropping onto store shelves around the country seemingly out of nowhere every month, we wondered what Blizzard was doing to make its game stand out from other, less-beardy offerings. The introduction of two new races (the Undead and the Night Elves) is a welcome one, but what else is new? We don't know, but Bill does...

"The introduction of elements from role-playing games, such as Hero units, items and skill trees, make this game an incredibly fun experience. Building up a named Hero to eventually have several spells and items and then unleashing him against an enemy force is very satisfying, and gives the player an additional sense of accomplishment, past simply defeating his opponent'.

TWO GAMES IN ONE

The decision to introduce role-playing elements into what is essentially a real-time strategy game is an intriguing one, and could prove decisive if Blizzard manages to get it right. A system where your most important units gain levels and improve their skills providing you can keep them alive is likely to make for a more tactical game than we are used to in this genre, given that most RTS games charge you with building as much as you can as quick as you can, and then killing everything in sight as fast as you can. Coupled with the new 3D engine, the RPG elements should make for a very different *WarCraft* experience. This is a good thing: the old 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' adage is often just an excuse to make the same game again with a different name and rake in the cash. This game deserves to be as big as we believe it will be.





Multiplayer fans will love the new online options.



Now you'll have to fight the Italians as well.



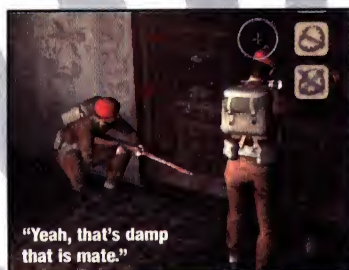
Sounds grim but you can shoot helmets off.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks
PUBLISHER Take 2
WEBSITE
www.illusionsoftworks.com

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE
Spring/Summer 2002



"Yeah, that's damp that is mate."

WITH MAFIA NEARING

completion, we can expect Illusion Softworks to start ramping up its efforts on *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, the sequel to 1998's bestselling WWII tactical action game. As with its high-ranking predecessor, *H&D2* will again offer players the chance to pick four soldiers from a pool of dozens across a number of linear missions, in the fight against the Hun which takes place this time across North Africa as well as Europe. As well as directly controlling your troops, you will also be able to give them orders, which although innovative first time around, didn't work out quite so well in the original game due to some sloppy

coding. This time around however, to give the game a focus, players will have a central character, Gary Bristol, who you must keep alive until the final showdown.

It goes without saying that new weapons and vehicles will make it into the game, but after seeing it in action back in May, what impressed us most (apart from the detailed graphics), was the excellent AI. This has German soldiers reacting on sight and sound, and even working co-operatively on a level not seen since *Half-Life*. Guards will patrol the perimeter of a base, but if their superiors are out of sight, they might sneak off to have a fag among the sandbags.

If you liked *Commandos 2* and were hankering for something with a bit more action and less adventure, *Hidden & Dangerous 2* will be the game for you. Moreover, Illusion has plans to incorporate a great deal more multiplayer options than the original's co-operative campaign.

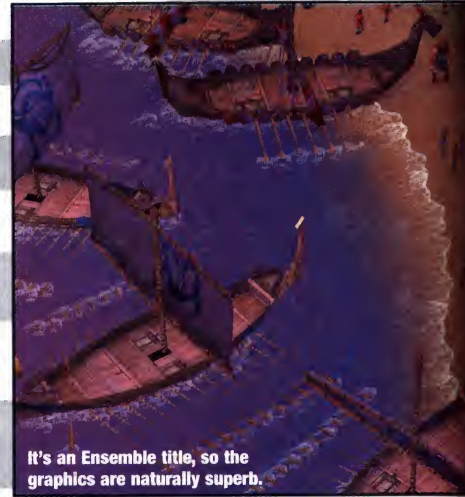
"We are following the trend of more team-oriented multiplayer styles," says Illusion Softworks' Juraj Bocinec. "As in *Counter-Strike* or *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, we'll have teampay options, with a whole range of player commands and tactics set across various maps giving players a feeling of real combat. This is what will make the game fun to play."



Age Of Empires in 3D? Not quite, but it's close.



Take control of a mythical civilisation and cause bother with the powers of their gods.



It's an Ensemble title, so the graphics are naturally superb.

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ensemble
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE
www.microsoft.com

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE
Spring 2002

ENSEMBLE, CREATORS OF

the *Age Of Empires* series, are taking their latest title to literally godlike proportions. *Age Of Mythology* is a hugely ambitious game which attempts to bring to life the stuff of legend at a time when the Greek, Norse and Egyptian cultures were competing for supremacy. While many of the units and characters in *AoM* will be familiar to long-time *AoE* fans, the

dependency on the power of each culture's individual gods will make for an entirely new type of game. Your choice of god will determine your military and economic abilities and also which ridiculously over-the-top unique abilities you get to unleash on your enemies, such as earthquakes and meteor showers among other things.

The big news here is that this will be the first Ensemble title to be fully

3D. It has to be said that while *AoE II* is undoubtedly an excellent 2D game, sooner or later Ensemble had to bite the bullet and bring its technology in line with its incredible knack for making hugely addictive RTS titles. It's happened, and *Age Of Mythology* is its name. Stick this one on your most-wanted list and look out for an extensive preview in *PC ZONE*, coming up some time soon.

OUT NOW! OUT NOW!

ACTUALIZE

OUT NOW! OUT NOW!

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP XTREME

ARCTIC RALLY

U.S. RALLY

BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

SAFARI RALLY



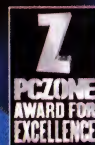
"Joins the leader of the pack, graphically it goes to the top of the podium, I haven't seen anything like it before!"

- 85% Christmas 2001 Issue - PC Zone

"The best looking rally game on the PC yet"

- PC Format

www.rallychampionshipxtreme.com



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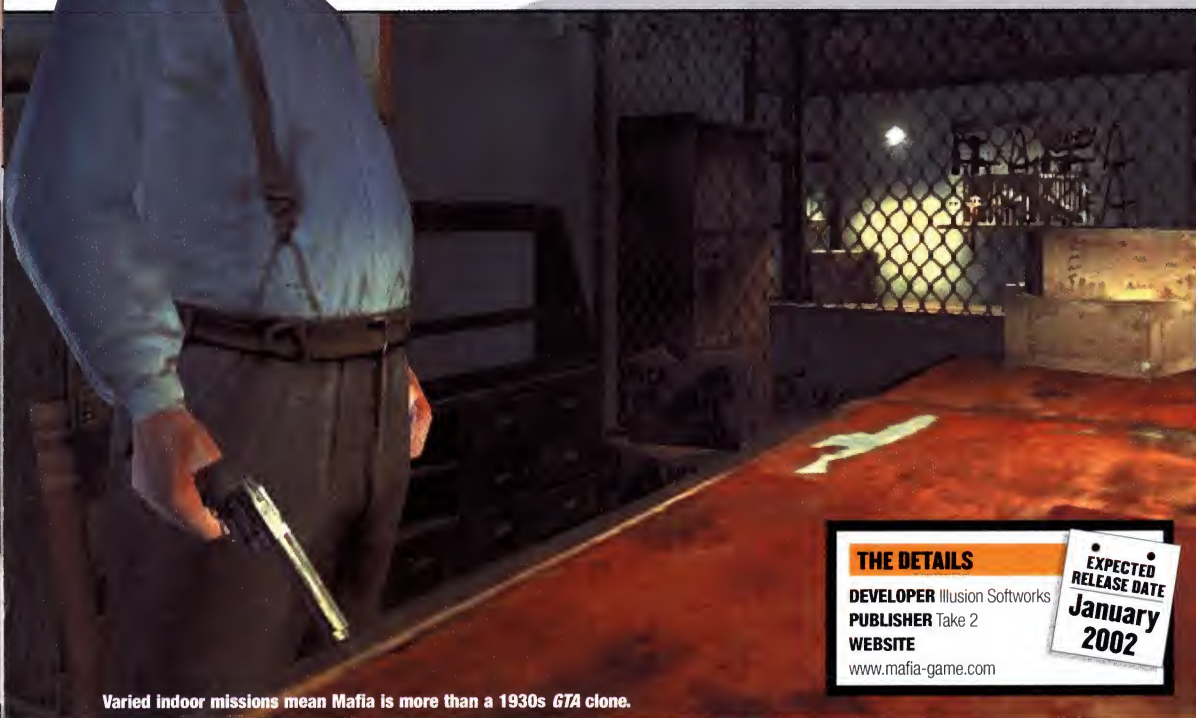
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MAFIA: THE CITY OF



Varied indoor missions mean Mafia is more than a 1930s GTA clone.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks
PUBLISHER Take 2
WEBSITE
www.mafia-game.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**January
2002**

PERHAPS THE FIRST BIG PC game of 2002 and one destined to have *Godfather* fans dusting off their violin cases and collecting their pinstripes from the cleaners, *Mafia* comes courtesy of Hidden & Dangerous creator Illusion Softworks. We managed to play through three near-complete missions when code was dropped by the ZONE office recently, and to call the game a 1930s reworking of *Grand Theft Auto* wouldn't be too far off the mark. "That's fair enough," says the game's lead designer Daniel Vavra. "There are many parallels between *GTA3* and us, but we haven't been influenced by *GTA* and *Mafia* has been even longer in development than *GTA3*. There are similar features, but when you play the game, you realise that these are only on the surface. Yes the game is set in a huge city and involves plenty of driving, but whereas *GTA* is pure arcade, *Mafia* is a more realistic simulation. It has a deep



Evidence suggests a sniper rifle will be part of the arsenal.

Once again, the story revolves around the irrepressible Mullins who takes on a whole new batch of terrorists with a deadly virus in their charge. Having been impressed by the latest build, we asked Raven Software's project administrator Kenn Hoekstra what excited him most about this sequel.

"I think the random scenario generator is the most exciting thing because it's never been done in a FPS before. The ability to generate random maps with unique environments, enemies, weather and goals adds a nearly infinite single-player element." Sounds great.

Due to the emphasis placed on the single-player game, Raven has left it late before adding in multiplayer options. However, the focus on the single-player game will bring its advantages in terms of AI. As Kenn explains: "Our programmers ripped out *Quake III's* AI code and replaced it with a new system we call the LICH Artificial Intelligence toolbox. Certain enemies will behave differently. Street thugs, for example, won't be as



The random scenarios feature is a winner.

tactically sound as fully trained terrorists or military personnel. If you use the same method to dispatch enemies over and over again, they'll learn from the experience and take countermeasures to stop you." Bold claims indeed, but if Raven pulls it off, it might just guarantee itself another FPS success story. And when will it be ready Kenn? "Early 2002 is the expected time-frame for release, though no official drop-dead date has been given." So that'll be September then.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Activision
PUBLISHER Raven
WEBSITE
www.ravensoft.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**Spring
2002**

WE ALL REMEMBER THE FIRST game. One-man-army John Mullins overcoming insurmountable odds on a mission to rid the world of evil, parting limbs from terrorists' bodies with an assortment of devastating weaponry. So what's changed? Well for those of you who didn't catch last month's preview, rest assured that there's plenty to get excited about.



Raven is keen to avoid the original game's controversial Middle Eastern setting.

LOST HEAVEN



The script isn't for minors.

storyline about gangsters, on which all the missions are based. You can't even compare the indoor missions because *GTA3* doesn't have them, but in *Mafia* these make up at least 50 per cent of the game – a very important and entertaining 50 per cent of the game.”

Vavra likes to describe *Mafia* as a “fully playable classic gangster movie,” offering a lot more scope than simply driving fragile cars, throwing Molotov cocktails, shooting Tommy guns or clubbing innocent bystanders to death. As was the case in *Hidden &*

Dangerous, each of the 20 missions could feasibly have been, or be made into, a classic gangster movie. From the very beginning the game throws you into the murky world of organised crime. You play a cab driver, who finds a couple of hoods jumping in the back of his cab demanding he drive off pronto, and in a matter of minutes, you've gone from cabbie to crook. If you'd had the option to turn your passengers over to the authorities it might have been a different story – you'll never know.

GANGSTER TRIPPIN'

Driving around the massive city of Lost Heaven, players will find the cops are a far tougher bunch than those in *GTA*. Just jumping a red light will get you in hot water, and although even the fastest of the 60 different vehicles will be relatively slow compared to today's hatchbacks, the pace of the game will be suitably frantic, day or night.

“On foot the game takes place in many different interiors or non-urban locations,” says Daniel. “In one mission you have to blow up a whorehouse, in others smuggle alcohol over the border, assassinate politicians or even go on a date with your future wife.”

Compared with *GTA's* ‘take this there’ missions, *Mafia's* are surprisingly varied, not only in setting, but also in scope – as well as shooting, plenty of stealth will be required. NPC characters will also be on hand to help you out, even in blazing firefights.

In terms of multiplayer, only racing modes will be present in the shipped game, with full multiplayer options added later, either as a free download or part of a mission disc. Until then, with its living, breathing city to explore, *Mafia* promises to be a highly atmospheric experience, sometimes darkly comic and thoroughly diverse. Just don't confuse Lost Heaven with its fictional neighbour Liberty City and you won't upset anyone.

Look at the polygons on that plant.

Sixty driveable vehicles, of which this is soon to be one.

They don't all dive out of the way.



The bridge crew are all in 3D, which adds considerably to the immersion.

Humans, Klingons, Cardassians, Romulans and Ferengi are all featured, plus a new secret race.

BRIDGE COMMANDER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Totally Games
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.bridgecommander.com

EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE
**Spring
2002**

FOR A WHILE BACK THERE, *Bridge Commander* looked like it was teetering on the edge of existence, as mumblings about quality control wafted about the PC games industry. However, it seems that Totally Games has got its act together, because *Bridge Commander* is showing signs of being a game to keep a watchful eye on, both for die-hard Trekkies and action/strategy fans alike.

Taking the captain's seat you'll have to order your crew members around to make your ship the ultimate

intergalactic fighting machine. Your crew include a first and second officer, helmsperson and engineering officer. Totally Games claims the finished product will feature ‘The most accurate ship models ever in a *Star Trek* space sim, painstakingly recreated with materials taken directly from Paramount Archives,’ which means fans can be assured of total authenticity.

Battles will be hugely reliant on tactical knowledge, with each ship having its own strengths and

weaknesses which can be exploited to you or the enemy's advantage. Totally Games eagerly boasts that each battle will provide ‘Dramatic combat with large capital ships possessing significant firepower but limited manoeuvrability that will require smart weapon management and skillful manoeuvring to defeat your enemy.’ *Star Trek* fans should start getting excited now, because *Bridge Commander* is beginning to look more appealing than *Seven of Nine* in a skintight Lycra catsuit. Put it away... ➔



GALLEON

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Confounding Factor
PUBLISHER Interplay
WEBSITE www.confounding-factor.com/galleon/index.htm

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE
Early 2002

GALLEON HAS NOT HAD IT

easy. More than four years in the making, the game has struggled to shrug off an endless stream of *Tomb Raider* comparisons (arising more from being the first post-*Raider* game from Lara co-creator Toby Gard than any actual similarity), and an equally tiresome string of bad "d'arh me hearties"-esque pirate jokes (made worse by the fact that the game is in fact not concerned with piracy), not to mention the inevitable backlash arising from being the most delayed game this side of 3D Realms. Luckily, action/adventure fans can take heart, as *Galleon* is finally nearing completion, and it's looking breathtaking.

Galleon's gameplay comes straight from the pages of the action/adventure style guide, with elements of exploration, puzzling and combat, a swaggering hero in Rhama Sabrier and a rollicking yarn to tie it all together. Rhama is also accompanied by two female companions, Faith and Mihoko, each of whom you'll be able to interact with in a variety of interesting ways. Developer

Confounding Factor isn't trying to reinvent the genre so much as perfect it.

"We're not trying to break new ground in terms of plotline," Toby confides. "It's pretty damn tongue in cheek. It's your basic race against the enemy to find items of splendid wondrousness, with a touch of romance thrown in for good measure. Hopefully people will get into the simple exuberance of it."

SWANK-O-RHAMA

Where the Bristol-based development team is truly innovating however, is in the astounding dynamism and fluidity of motion given to Rhama, whom Toby agrees is probably the most agile and responsive game character ever created. The astonishingly minimal control system allows Rhama to clamber over almost every piece of geometry in a remarkably convincing manner, reacting to every kind of surface and texture in unique and intelligent ways. "*Galleon* is considerably more than the sum of its parts, it's about how it feels to play. The fun comes from being this incredible character that can handle almost anything. The control system is simple and intuitive but at the same time allows for incredible flexibility in terms of how you move around the game's environment."

Toby cites Rhama's hugely convincing interaction with the *Galleon* environment as the element of the game he's most proud of, and many of the game's set pieces have clearly been constructed around this strength. "He can actually climb around on giant monsters as they are trying to attack him, just like Sinbad would," beams Toby.

It's not all just about Rhama's nimbleness however, as both *Galleon's* puzzling and combat ("a bit like *Final Fight* or *Power Stone*") are streets ahead of genre norms. Rather than frustratingly arbitrary conundrums or hackneyed block-pushing dilemmas, *Galleon's* puzzles have actually been woven into the plot structure. "The puzzles vary in their intensity, but they're all specific to the island and the story. I guess it's a bit like adventure game-style puzzlery but without the painful inventory management."

Each and every aspect of *Galleon* seems to convey this carefully considered elegance of design, such that it almost seems like an afterthought to mention things like the lush graphics and stylised-cartoon look of the game. In short, there's very little about *Galleon* that does not smack of excellence, yet the whole rarely strays from a proven action/adventure formula. Discerning genre fans could hardly ask for more.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER 2015
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE
<http://mohaa.ea.com>

EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE
February
2002

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

WHEN MEDAL OF HONOR slipped to early 2002, *Wolfenstein* breathed a sigh of relief in the knowledge that it would carry the award for Best First-Person Shooter 2001. Its reign at the top might be pretty short-lived though, as we've had news through that *Medal Of Honor* is set to ship in the first week of February. According to Steve Fukuda, a level designer, the game proper is finished, and the team is now busy tweaking details, optimising the code and fixing bugs. Never one to give a development team an easy ride in their busiest period, we grilled him about how the AI was shaping up.

Steve told us the AI is now up to a level where it uses the environment heavily to seek out advantages. "NPCs currently throw grenades through windows, fire and manoeuvre, blind fire around corners, run for back-up and use cover." All of which would be pretty damn impressive if theory is translated into practice.

We saw some evidence of this when we were over at the 2015 headquarters, and although it's hard to judge the

overall picture from an isolated incident, the NPCs show huge promise. In one section we were following a friendly agent who actually had the wherewithal to dodge through spotlights, pausing when in danger and moving on when there was a clear path. If this sort of interaction can be coded throughout then our expectations for the game are going to be surpassed.

The team is still being tight-lipped about the multiplayer side, but we have managed to glean that the emphasis is going to be on the team-based action and with any luck you'll see *Counter-Strike*-style battles, along with co-operative squad-based missions. The multiplayer demo – as with *Wolfenstein* – is the one that's going to surface first, on December 14, followed by a full single-player mission in February. And, despite the fact that the game hasn't shipped we can exclusively state that a mission pack is already being worked on.



And the Europeans complain about Skegness.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bioware
PUBLISHER Interplay
WEBSITE
www.neverwinternights.com

EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE
Early
2002

FOR RPG TRADITIONALISTS, especially those with a shady history in the glamorous realm of pen-and-paper RPGing, Bioware is the incumbent lord of anything even remotely resembling a virtual dungeon. As any self-respecting goblin-fancier will tell you,

the *Baldur's Gate* series is still widely held as the yardstick for fantasy RPGs, and *Neverwinter Nights* promises to deliver an experience that's just as epic and absorbing as its forebears, er, bears.

But the most exciting thing about *NWN*, and the thing that could cause major ripples even in the wider gaming world, is the inclusion of innovative new multiplayer features that give players the power to create their own gaming experiences. Taking pen-and-paper RPGs as a model, Bioware has created an impressive Dungeon Master mode, which allows one player to take control of the game, shaping and directing the experience for the other players. In a very cool twist, the DM not only oversees the action but can enter the fray at any stage by possessing a creature in the game world.

Then there's the hugely powerful *NWN* Toolset, which allows you to construct your own game modules and play through them with your friends (or complete strangers on the Net if your friends frown on such behaviour). As Greg Zeschuk, joint CEO of Bioware

explains: "The thing I think players will like most about the game is its flexible nature – you'll be able to play *Neverwinter Nights* in almost every conceivable way, certainly more than any other game."

NWN also promises to set new standards in graphical terms, shedding the archaic 2D of *Baldur's Gate* for a fully realised 3D world, as well as going nuts with pyrotechnic special effects. Clearly, *NWN* is going to set a new high watermark for the genre; it may even change the face of gaming forever.



The Bioware gang are going to town on the spell effects.



He's certainly got a healthy glow.



Dungeon Siege: no stats, plenty splats.

Gas Powered Games promises seamless transitions from one environment to the next.



Look, can we talk about this?

DUNGEON SIEGE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.dungeonsiege.com

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE
April 2002

GAS POWERED GAMES IS

intent on taking a large portion of beardiness out of the RPG genre by simplifying just about everything it can feasibly get away with. There will be no staring at stats for hours in this action-based RPG - everything from character generation to character development has been simplified to keep players focused on combat and plot development. A rather ingenious form of character development raises magic and combat skills depending on

how often players use them, and all characters have access to all the magic and weapons in the game, so when you find the ones you feel comfortable with, using them regularly will increase your skills in your favoured weapons and spells.

Increasing skills according to usage is not exactly a first, but opening up all the items in the game to every class most certainly is. Also new to the genre is a 'zoning' system, which takes you seamlessly from outdoor environments

to indoor ones and vice versa. That loading screen which always got on your tits when you entered a new location will be a thing of the past, as will running back to a temple when your mage pops his clogs (characters go unconscious before they die and can be revived after battle, so it's very difficult to lose them completely).

With strong character development and an epic plot, *Dungeon Siege* could well prove to be the thinking man's *Diablo* upon its release.

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gearbox
PUBLISHER Vivendi
WEBSITE www.gearboxsoftware.com

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE
Q1 2002

WHILE HALF THE GAME

publishers in the world seem intent on taking excellent single-player games and bringing them online to the multi-playing masses, developer Gearbox is doing exactly the opposite by producing a single-player version of

one of the greatest multiplayer games of all time: *Counter-Strike*.

The tried and tested multiplayer gameplay of terrorists against anti-terrorists over a series of levels will now come to life as a single-player mission-based affair in which you lead your computer-controlled squad through multiple objectives to successfully complete each mission. However, although standard *Counter-Strike* game mechanics built around hostage rescue and VIP escort missions will definitely play a part in *Condition Zero*, there will also be entirely new game modes to explore, although Gearbox is reluctant to give too much away about this aspect of the game just yet, preferring instead to let gamers find out for themselves what's in store. Needless to say, although CZ is being developed in answer to a single-player market for online's finest shooter, you can be sure you will be able to take advantage



Get ready to kiss your modem goodbye.



Gearbox created *Opposing Force*, *Blue Shift*, and the PS2 version of *Half-Life*.

online of all the new features CZ brings to the *Counter-Strike* experience, including the option to play through the single-player game co-operatively in a multiplayer environment.

Given the proven track record Gearbox has in previous collaborations with Valve, we're confident that there is no way it can possibly go wrong with this. The proven intensely addictive gameplay of *Counter-Strike* married to an immersive and slowly evolving single-player plot-led gaming experience sounds almost too good to be true. As soon as we get our hands on it for 'testing purposes', you'll be the first to know.

Shadows, lighting and hi-res textures will make all the difference here.



Prepare to be amazed by the scale and detail of the game world.



I think I can see my house.



Even these chaps can't get over how good it looks.

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Elixir Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE
www.elixir-studios.co.uk

EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE
**Summer
2002**

THE ONE THING THAT'S ALWAYS

been clear about *Republic: The Revolution* is that it was never going to be your average game. From the off, start-up developer Elixir made it clear it was doing something remarkable, tossing out facts and figures that were so far beyond our expectations of what was feasible with current technology that all we could do was nod our heads gravely and pretend not to be surprised.

Since then any scepticism on our part has been put to rest, as we've not only seen this extraordinary real-time strategy game in motion but coerced Elixir boss and *Republic* mastermind Demis Hassabis to explain the technology to us in terms even we technical lackbrains could grasp. So

yes, there will be close to a million individual citizens populating the fictional Soviet republic of Novistrana. They will all look noticeably different, and each will possess their own daily routine, beliefs and loyalties. And, indeed, there will be a hugely flexible AI that allows these citizens to react to your political machinations in a totally natural-seeming way.

And this is what the game is all about: using any means necessary (political, criminal, military, religious or business) to gain enough support amongst Novistrana's citizenship to become the new President. Sounds easy enough, except that you'll be competing with up to 15 other endlessly cunning and resourceful faction leaders with exactly the same thing in mind.

BETWEEN FREEDOM AND FEAR

One reservation that remained even after we'd come to terms with the technology powering the game was the dauntingly large-scale and freeform

nature of the gameplay. Luckily, Demis was on hand to reassure us: "That's something we're carefully monitoring. Freedom to choose your own path to victory and non-linear gameplay is something I strongly believe the majority of gamers enjoy, but of course we cannot allow the player to feel lost. There will always be help at hand in the form of a right-hand man giving useful advice when the player gets stuck. And there are clear structured things that have to be achieved on the way to becoming President."

Demis also assured us that *Republic* can be played at almost any level of involvement, making the game only as hardcore as you want it to be. So, for example, you could take a very hands-on approach, overseeing every action and decision right down to selecting which commodities the shops in your town will sell. Or, you can simply sit back and watch events unfold, tinkering with things when you feel the urge but essentially treating the game as a simulator.

We were also a little worried that despite the obvious power of the graphics engine, some of the screenshots seen thus far were a little underwhelming, drab even. We asked Demis just how indicative they were of the final look of the game: "Not very – they really just served to show what sort of look and feel we were aiming to create, without core things integrated such as lighting, shadowing, occlusion, detailed textures, etc."

Pheh. Everyone breathe a sigh of relief, confident in the knowledge that the game will be a major revolution for strategy gaming after all.

The only remaining issue is the multiplayer game, which may or may not be included on the initial release. "We have many cool ideas for multiplayer possibilities in the future," consoles Demis, "including co-operation and even some pretty far-out massively multiplayer ideas, but it's a bit early to be talking about them. We'll see how *Republic* does and then decide where to take things from there."



← COLIN MCRAE 3

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Codemasters
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.codemasters.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**CHRISTMAS
2002**

FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF

years we've had to sift through buckets of mocked-up screenshots that purport to show in-game action when we know for a fact that you'll never see the same detail when you pay your £34.99 and play the game proper. For that reason we were – to say the least – a touch sceptical when what were obviously a bunch of touched-up photographs landed on our desk claiming to be in-game models from forthcoming drive *Colin McRae 3*. However, a quick call to Codemasters reaffirmed the fact – what you're looking at here is actual in-game models of the new Ford Focus RS WRC.

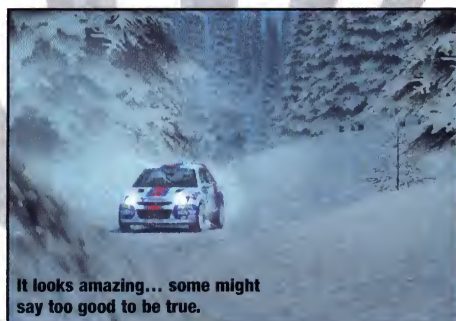
Rick Nath, associate-producer was quick to cut us off when we tried to pooh-pooh the idea. "Graphically, the in-game models will be over 16 times more detailed than those in *Colin McRae Rally 2.0*. The polygon count for the Focus model is up to a staggering 13,000, as compared to about 800 for the previous game."

Impressive stuff, and the Codey boys are at pains to point out that although the improvements aren't going to be purely graphical, the new level of detail, which includes the driver/co-driver (who even grabs hold of the roll cage to steady himself in a collision) as well as opening and

detachable panels, doors, tailgates, bonnets, bumpers and wheels, makes the experience all the more immersive.

This is backed up by the working relationship Codemasters has with the Ford team, which includes an access-all-areas tag that got the developers anywhere they wanted during the 2001 rally season, and info and data from the technicians to ensure that the in-game physics are as accurate as possible.

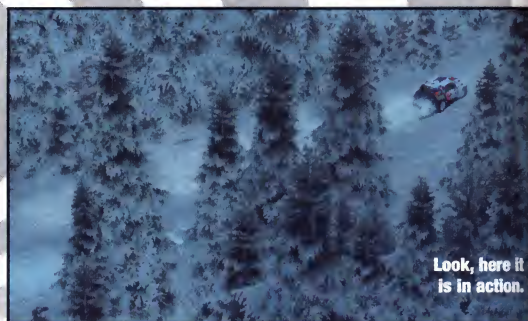
All of which points to the fact that once this is released in the latter half of next year, there'll be a new benchmark for the rally game on the PC. The king is dying, long live the king.



It looks amazing... some might say too good to be true.



This is a real in-game model...



Look, here it is in action.

FREELANCER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**Spring
2002**

DIGITAL ANVIL IS QUIETLY

getting on with the business of creating one of the best space combat sims ever to grace a PC. Conceived by Chris Roberts (of *Wing Commander* fame/infamy, delete as applicable), *Freelancer* promises to be the most open-ended space combat experience you've ever played. There will be literally hundreds of missions to choose from, and you can take on any of them in any order at any time without worrying about the main storyline in the game.

Continuing the non-linear flavour of the whole thing is a dynamic reputation which dictates that everything you do in the game has an effect on your standing with the different factions in the *Freelancer* universe. There are no specific classes in the game, you simply go about your business doing whatever you like and the characters in the gameworld decide whether they like you or not accordingly. Digital Anvil says it is trying to create a living world where players don't feel they have to

follow the storyline and can just immerse themselves in the gameworld and play it for as long as they like.

It all sounds very much like *Elite* to us, and if Digital Anvil is using Braben's classic as a role model then we most certainly won't complain. A truly open universe with the total freedom this would allow, coupled with a classic plot and superb visuals (see accompanying screenshots) would surely shoot *Freelancer* right to the top of the space combat sim hall of fame.

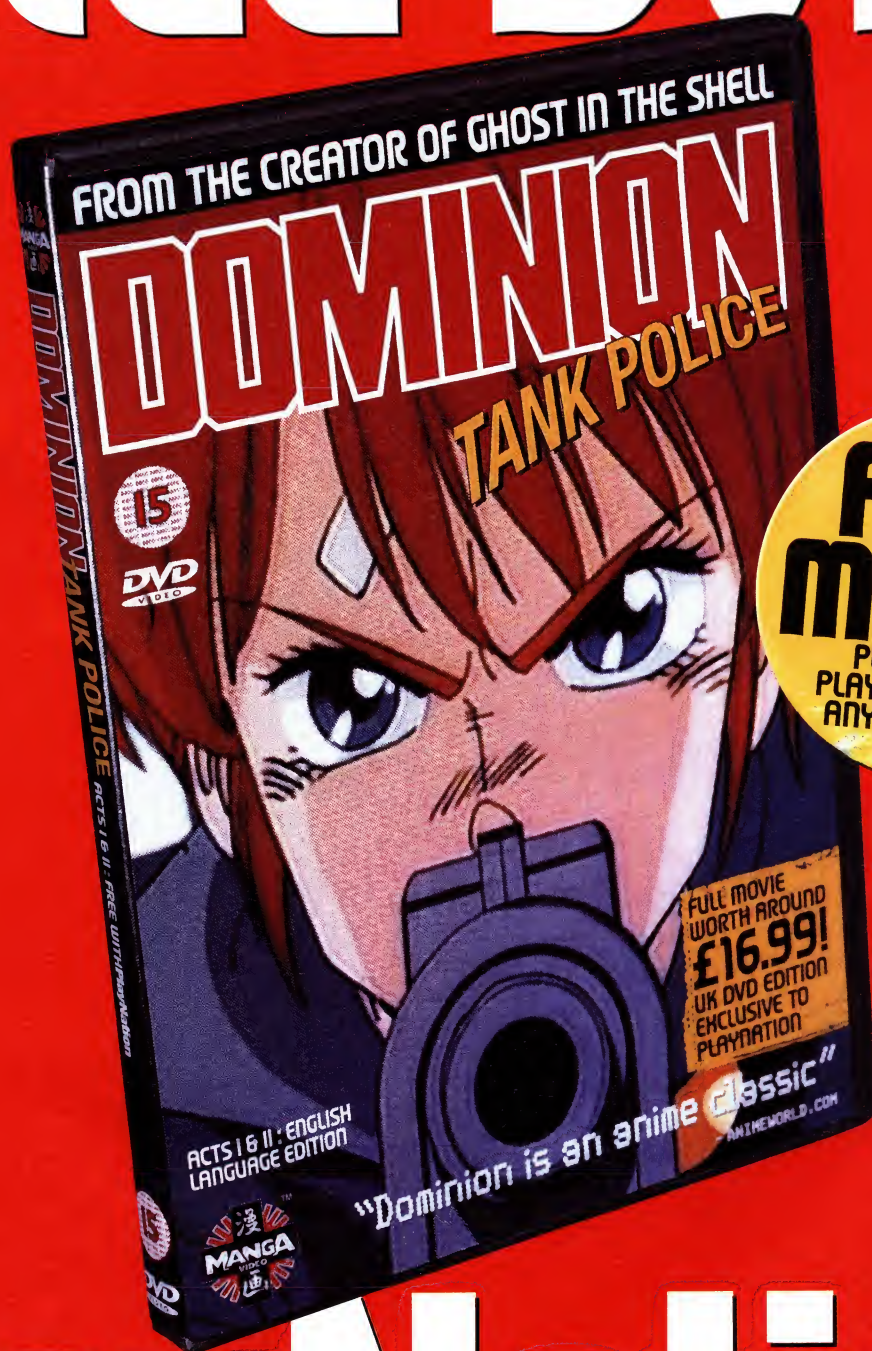


Despite its long development span, the graphics still look superb.



Freelancer: hopes are high this one's going to be something special.

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JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven Software
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.lucasarts.com

EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE
**Spring
2002**

AFTER A GENERATION OF disappointment, *Star Wars* fans were given a new hope with the emergence of the excellent *Galactic Battlegrounds*. And that trend seems set to continue with Raven's stunning-looking shooter *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*. Having cast our eyes over the game a couple of months back, we were already pretty impressed by what we'd seen, and were further drawn into the ever-swelling fervour surrounding the title when we caught up with Raven's Graham Fuchs (the game's producer), and grilled him thoroughly on what we can expect come spring next year when the game will finally (and hopefully) hit the UK shelves.

For those of you not yet familiar with the game's plot, here's a brief

"You'll be able to throw the sabre at enemies, then use the Force to pull it back and use it to cut open gates"

synopsis for you. As in the first game, you play as Jedi-turned-mercenary Kyle Katarn, who works for the New Republic. However, as Graham explains: "Something occurs which causes Kyle to re-embrace the Force to face a new threat to galactic peace. I wouldn't be surprised if Kyle runs into a few familiar faces along the way." Neither would we, Graham.

He was also quick to point out that the *Quake III* engine is throwing up some interesting possibilities. "We're able to use motion-capture data in animating the characters to make them more lifelike. We've included a lot of motion-captured data in Kyle's sabre attacks, which is under the complete control of the player." Sounds nice.

But, as ever, the zenith of every FPS is the quality of its AI. We asked Graham what we can expect from the Imperial totalitarian scum that constitutes the enemy. "The AI will be better able to react specifically to the player's actions than in previous FPSs. Enemies will be much braver or more likely to attack or flee depending on whether the player is wielding a blaster-type weapon or a lightsabre. Someone with Force powers isn't going

to be as afraid of a lightsabre as a Stormtrooper would be. The AI will also feature more group dynamics. Stormtroopers will tend to be braver if there's an officer around, so if you take him out first the troopers are more likely to panic. The advanced AI also extends into the multiplayer. Certain bots will have an attachment to certain others, so if you kill one of their buddies the bot may come after you." Which sounds superb – AI driven by vengeance and vendettas is the sort of human behaviour we've been looking for.

Of the 11 weapons on offer, Graham keenly informs us that the lightsabre excites him the most. "It's now a fully functional Jedi weapon that you have great control over in terms of how it can be used, both in battle and out. There will be a host of attacks at your disposal, and the better you become with the lightsabre, the more elaborate moves you'll see. However, the control has been kept simple. You will also be able to throw the sabre at enemies, then use

the Force to pull it back, and use it to cut open gates, open passages, etc."

Sounds like a dumper truckload of thought has gone into the weapons, but what about the vehicles? "There's going to be some interesting things that Kyle will be able to do that he hasn't done in previous games, but you're breaking up, I can't hear you..." Oh, OK. Bye then.

A brave stormtrooper decides to stay and fight.



"Hokey religions and ancient weapons..." You know the rest.



"Die Rebel scum!"

← MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.totalwar.com

**EXPECTED
RELEASE DATE**
**Autumn
2002**

DESPITE ITS ALL-ROUND

unrivalled excellence, there is one aspect of Creative Assembly's BAFTA award-winning *Shogun: Total War* that perhaps held it back in terms of multimillion sales: the fact that it was set in medieval Japan rather than medieval Europe. Not that we're complaining but, understandably for most, it's far easier to relate to a knight in shining armour than it is a samurai in hakama or kataginu – leaving aside the problem of pronunciation. Similarly, how many of you can have claimed to have seen *Rashomon* or

Seven Samurai? How about *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*? Exactly.

No matter how many billions more will buy the recently renamed *Medieval: Total War* on the basis of its setting, the signs look good that gameplay-wise the game will build upon its predecessor's solid foundations. For those who missed it, *Shogun* was, of course, a delicate blend of Warhammer's epic table-top battles, mixed with a healthy dose of *Civilization*-style turn-based complexity. A potent mix for sure, and one that worked perfectly. It's no small complement when we say that *Shogun* was the most important strategy game since *Dune 2* and, if we dare carry the analogy further, *Medieval* could be to *Shogun* what *C&C* was to Westwood's ground-breaking first RTS.

"We've kept the basic premise of *Shogun: Total War* but completely redesigned the gameplay to make it suitable for the period," says Michael

game and the 12 playable factions each have their own unique units, tech trees and strengths/weaknesses, with more than 100 different unit types in total, from Knights Templar and Bedouin Camel Warriors to Brigands, Archers and Peasants."

WHAT IS THIS CASTLE CALLED THAT STANDS HARD BY?

One of *Shogun*'s few weaknesses and conversely *Medieval*'s greatest single innovation, is the game's castle battles. As well as towering stone keeps and forbidding ramparts, the whole lot will be fully destructible, with players able to field mangonels, siege cannons, trebuchets and ballista.

"Siege warfare was a very important part of Medieval warfare, and we've dedicated a lot of time to making castle sieges an incredible experience," offers de Plater. "Players will also be able to custom-design their castles by adding defensive features, such as catapult

"One of *Shogun*'s weaknesses and conversely *Medieval*'s greatest innovation, is the game's castle battles"

de Plater, creative director of The Creative Assembly, on the differences between both games. "The 3D battlefields are now as varied as they are spectacular to look at – with everything ranging from deserts to lush European landscapes. Sieges have now become an important part of the

towers, palisades, and outer walls. In the earlier periods, the battlefield is dominated by knights and heavy cavalry. Longbows then make their mark and, towards the end of the game, gunpowder and heavy artillery will heavily affect the gameplay – and the castles."



When Kings are slain in battle, their territories will descend into fractious squabbling.

Still based on *The Art Of War* text, Creative has adapted the strategies to take medieval tactics into account.



CULTURE CLUBBING

Shogun campaign veterans will remember how important it was to keep generals and heroes alive, and in *Medieval* we can expect a similar 'honour' system, with monarchs, their heirs, dukes and lords now boasting RPG-style character development, which, as de Plater says, "accrue various vices and virtues that reflect their actions". It seems a local lord crazed with bloodlust, as well as ruthless in combat, may well spark off a rebellion.

But it is the familiar as much as the new that will ensure *Medieval* takes over from *Shogun* as the wargame of choice for PC strategists and, while the 3D real-time battles – again featuring countless thousands of troops across far more varied terrain – will be just as epic in scope, the turn-based elements of resource management, diplomacy, research and espionage seem to have been significantly ramped up to mirror the game's far more varied spread of warring cultures.

"Part of the popularity of *Shogun: Total War* was the fact that it combined turn-based and real-time strategy," explains de Plater. "The 3D battles



From the Baltic to the Black Sea, *Medieval* offers varied terrain as players strive to conquer territories from the Holy Land to Hollyhead.

have much more meaning to the player if they've been involved in creating those battle conditions through their own strategic decisions. All manner of new non-combat units will feature, such as princesses, bishops, heretics, witch-finders, famous artists, and natural philosophers (scientists). These characters can trigger religious wars, negotiate treaties, create famous works of art or make incredible scientific discoveries," he adds.

"There are also new strategic changes such as the ability for armies to be transported across the sea via ships. One of my favourite new features is that each territory on the strategy map is now geographically accurate – and the border over which you attack that region will determine the nature of the battlefield that you fight on. So, if you attack a region from the north, the terrain may be mainly mountainous (and hard to capture)

but attacking the same region from the south could result in a flat lowland map. This adds another level of strategy to the turn-based game."

Though a full online campaign option has been ruled out for the sequel (as it eventually was for *Shogun*), it does little to diminish fervour for the game among PC ZONE's *Shogun* fans. Today, *Shogun* still remains the benchmark for wargamers and there seems little to challenge it, at

least until *Medieval* comes along. Having not yet had the chance to play the game first-hand we could be going slightly overboard, but from what we've seen we can safely say that *Medieval* will be the strategy game of 2002. All that remains is to try and predict what Total War scenario we can expect in 2004. Unfortunately, it's out of our hands, though we don't mind – it's bound to be another unrivalled epic.

Once more into the breach.



With weather like that, it must be England.



← NOTHING TO SEE HERE

How can you have a Most Wanted list without *Duke Nukem Forever* or *Deus Ex 2*? Because no one's ready to talk about them, that's how...



Guess the game?

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Having released just a handful of screenshots in the past four years – and not one in the last two, 3D Realms is hardly what you'd call accommodating when it comes to answering press queries. We sent some questions off asking about the status of *Duke Nukem Forever* via publisher Take 2 – the most probing of which was 'How's it going?', with the initial response from Take 2's PR Dept telling us not to hold our breath for answers.

So, no new details on the game – not that there ever were any, and certainly no new screenshots. All that we know for certain is that powered by *Unreal* technology, *Duke Nukem Forever* is a first-person shooter, starring an ageing blond misogynist meathead. You shoot things and they erupt in a shower of blood and bone. And it'll be done "when it's done". No news isn't necessarily bad news however. Rest assured we are on the case to bring you the first look at what could and should be the runaway game of the year. We just don't know what year that will be yet.

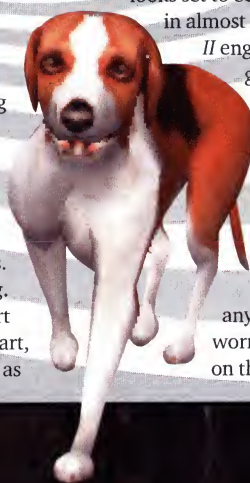
DOOM III

A new 3D engine from id Software is always worth getting excited about, but when it's being designed to power a new sequel to the most infamous and influential PC game of all time – now that's worth dropping your trousers in public for. When it comes to new graphics technology, id has few equals and the fact that it is concentrating on a single-player game means we could be looking at a 2003 release date. No doubt we can expect a

new wave of high school massacres about ten years after the game hits the streets.

ELITE IV

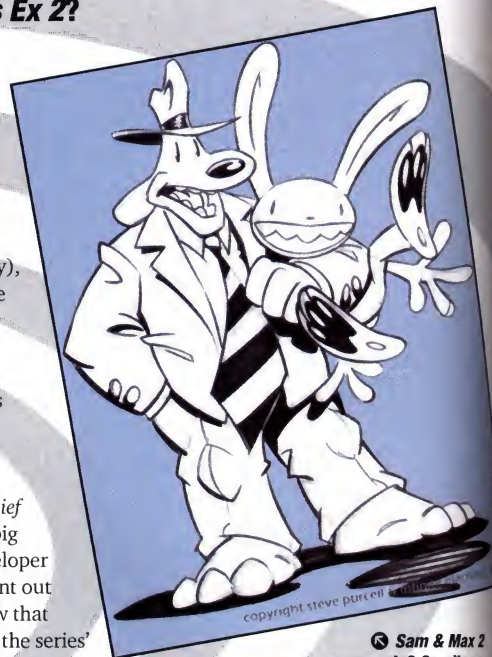
David Braben has been keeping a hermetically sealed lid on *Elite IV*, saying only that the latest in the space trading series will be closer to the original than to the two subsequent games in the series. For us, this is a very good thing. Curiously, however, the only art we've seen has been character art, prompting furious speculation as



to how far the game will reach into other genres. Frontier Developments recently released a small rolling demo of some of its animation work (dogs running about realistically), stating that the impressive technology will be incorporated into future games. Hopefully *Elite IV* will have some spaceships in it as well.

THIEF III

Neither of the first two *Thief* games were particularly big commercially, hence developer Looking Glass Studios went out of business. However, now that Warren Spector is behind the series' resurrection (he worked on the first game before starting *Deus Ex*), *Thief III* looks set to eclipse its predecessors in almost every way. The *Unreal II* engine will ensure next-gen graphics, while Randy Smith at Ion Storm tells us the game's AI will ideally represent "the most thorough simulation of a person in this type of game world that anyone has seen." Don't worry, we'll have more on this soon.



Sam & Max 2 on console? Sacrilege.

SAM & MAX 2

Whether you preferred *Day Of The Tentacle* or *Sam & Max Hit The Road*, the news that a sequel to the latter is in development should be enough to have retro adventurers and LucasArts fans squirting in anticipation. Infinite Machine is the developer, and many of the people in the team worked on a number of old LucasArts classics. Even better is that *Sam & Max* creator Steve Purcell is also involved and the game is to be set in outer space. Unfortunately, billed as an 'action/adventure', the game is



Work on *Unreal Championship* means a longer wait for *Unreal Warfare*.



The Stroggs are back for Quake IV.

currently scheduled for a console release. If it ends up like some sort of cartoon *Tomb Raider* clone, they can keep it.

QUAKE IV

Every approach to the developer thus far has been in vain, but we'll keep trying as the developer of *Quake IV* is, of course, Raven Games, perhaps one of only two groups able to make best use of id's 3D technology having developed *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Heretic II* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, as well as the forthcoming *Jedi Knight II*.

All we know is that *Quake IV* will use the *Doom III* engine and focus as much on single-player gameplay as multiplayer. We can exclusively speculate that as well as looking amazing and being a bit pacey, there might just be the odd rocket launcher.

UNREAL WARFARE

The sequel to *Unreal Tournament* and using the *Unreal 2* engine, Epic's multiplayer sequel was to be developed by Digital Extremes, co-creators of the original game. Since its quiet announcement, Digital Extremes seems to have put *Unreal Warfare* on the backburner while it works on *Unreal Championship* for the Xbox. Aside from that nothing else is known.

TEAM FORTRESS 2: BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS

Another case of 'whatever happened to' from the creators of *Half-Life*. Based on the popular mod for the original *Quake*, Valve hired its creators shortly before *Half-Life*'s release in 1998. A year later and with *Half-Life* having taken over the world, people were chomping at the bit for *Team Fortress*

2. Since *Counter-Strike* took over, *Team Fortress 2* has seemingly been wiped from the memory banks.

Shortly before the release of the latest *Counter-Strike* update, however, Valve head Gabe Newell confirmed that *TF2* was progressing steadily. As he stated wisely:

"If *Team Fortress 2*

doesn't add dramatically to the genre and is just a bigger, better version of *Team Fortress Classic* or *Counter-Strike* or any of the many cool mods already out there, then nobody's going to give a rat's ass about it." We recently contacted Valve asking for an update and we were told to cross our legs for a couple more months.

HALF-LIFE 2

It was to be announced back in January, then we heard Valve was to unveil an early glimpse of its über-sequel in May. But as the year draws to a close, there is still no official word on whether the most highly anticipated game is in existence. Unofficially the game does exist in some form, trust us on this.

DEUS EX 2

With a PlayStation 2 remix completed, Ion Storm can now fully concentrate on its sci-fi RPG, sequel of course to the BAFTA-winning *PC ZONE* Game Of The Year 2000. Without a doubt *DX2* will be scooping more awards, as apart from dozens of technological advances, the team is planning to make the game even more open than it was before.

The game is set 15 years after the original. With JC now a senior citizen, you play a new character (boy or girl), who might throughout the course of the game uncover the odd conspiracy or two. As with *Thief III*, we'll be bringing you an update next issue.

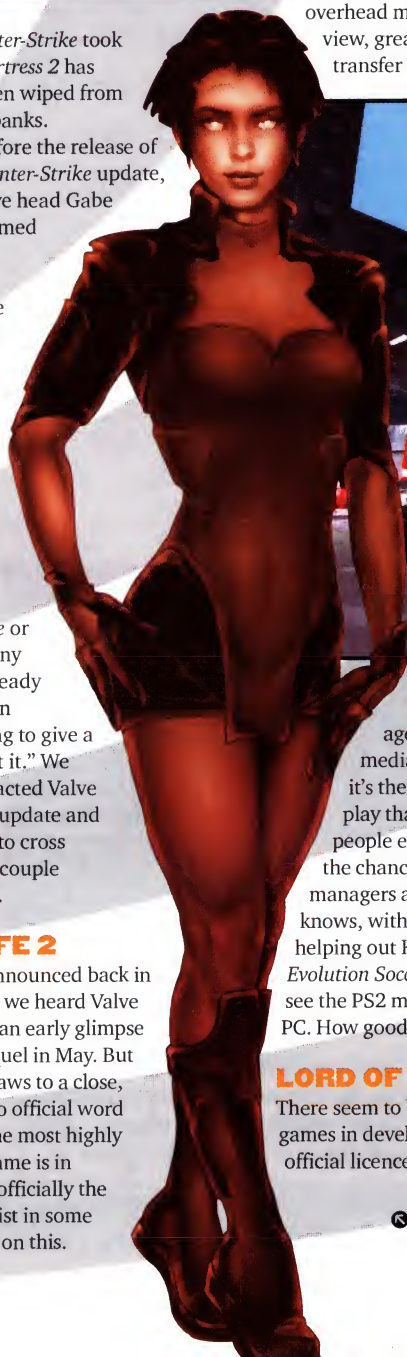
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

It doesn't take a genius to guess what new features will be making it into the new *Champ Man* engine. Updated stats, certainly. More stats, probably. A more streamlined interface, check. Specifically we can expect a fluid, overhead match play-by-play view, greater training options, transfer negotiations

(Sierra), the other one based on the series of films (from EA) – neither, we hasten to add, has been seen in public. The fear is, as with Tolkien games through the years, the official licence will water down what should be a hardcore gaming experience. At worst expect a *Harry Potter*-style cash-in, but if the games live up to the books, we could be looking at the best role-playing game since *Dungeons & Dragons* was conceived.

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Announced in May and shown to a ravenous pack of games journalists, *Knights Of The Old Republic* marks the beginning of the *Star Wars* story on PC, well it would do, seeing as it's set 4,000 years before the birth of Obi Wan and chums. In development with *Baldur's Gate* creator BioWare, release for this 3D RPG is still planned for Christmas 2002 and the game is much closer to next year's *Neverwinter Nights* than it is to BioWare's previous isometric efforts. You can trust us that it looks fantastic and expect a full preview very soon.



GTA 3 on PC will look better than the PS2 version.


involving player's agents and even greater media involvement. But it's the promise of full online play that is getting most people excited, with perhaps the chance to take on Xbox managers at a later date. Who knows, with Sports Interactive helping out Konami with its *Pro Evolution Soccer* stats, we may even see the PS2 masterpiece slip onto PC. How good would that be?

LORD OF THE RINGS

There seem to be two Tolkien-based games in development, one an official licence from the books

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

'Next time,' wrote Charlie Brooker in his review of *Grand Theft Auto II* two years ago, 'Can we have a proper *GTA* update? Or do we have to wait for the PlayStation 2 version?' As we all know by now, we have indeed had to wait for the PS2 version, though thankfully it has turned out to be a rather significant update compared to the first two games, limited as they were by PSone design.

The only minor quibbles in the PS2 game are the occasional graphical glitches like pop-up and lack of an in-game map – both features we can expect fixed in the PC version. If DMA can add a sizeable multiplayer component to complement the already stunning single-player game, we could be looking at a dead-cert Classic. 

Ⓢ This feisty young lady is from *Deus Ex 2*.

REVIEWS



The end of the year as we know it

★ REVIEWS EDITOR Martin Korda



So that was the year that was 2001. After 13 issues and 12 months, we gave out a paltry total of eight PC ZONE Classic Awards. Which just goes to show that either we're a bunch

of tight-fisted, cynical bastards who've spent too many years festering in front of our PCs to the point of disinterest, or a game still has to be truly exceptional to warrant our much-coveted Classic Award. I'll leave it up to you to decide.

Looking back on last year, it initially seemed as though it would shape up to be a disappointing one for the PC. The inevitable mutterings from the harbingers of PC doom were made all the worse with the official announcement of the Xbox, and a string of somewhat unimpressive games appearing on the shelves for several months on the trot. Then came E3, and all that changed. For the first time ever, the PC provided a staggering 30 per cent of all the games on show. And they weren't just numerous either. The quality shown there left just about everyone convinced that the PC was not only about to strike back, but assert itself as a gaming medium like never before. If you don't believe me, then just turn to our massive preview feature on the hottest games of 2002 and see for yourself.

The shooter genre, so long stagnant and unimpressive, received a massive and timely boost late on in 2001, with the stunning *Max Payne* and *AvP2* pointing the way forwards. And after seeing the likes of *Unreal II*, *Medal Of Honour* and *Jedi Knight II* first hand, I can't help but feel that by the end of next year we'll be seeing a very different-looking Top 10 shooters listing in our Top 100. And about time too.

Which reminds me. We should have had *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* in for review this issue, but it didn't release review code until the game is in the shops (which will be when you're reading this), so you're going to have to wait until next month for the definitive review of the game we hope will storm to the top of the shooters Top 10. But we promise we will have it next month, even if it means walking to the shops and paying real money for it. See you next year.

MOST WANTED... SPACE GAMES



ELITE IV

Publisher TBC • ETA end 2002

FREELANCER

Microsoft • ETA summer 2002

BOUNTY HUNTER

Publisher TBC • ETA April 2002

HOMEWORLD 2

Vivendi • ETA TBC

BRIDGE COMMANDER

Activision • ETA spring 2002

STAR WARS:

EPISODE II: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Activision • ETA TBC

X2: THE THREAT

Funcom • ETA mid-2002

STAR WARS:

GALAXIES EXPANSION PACK

Activision • ETA 2003

IMPERIUM GALACTICA 3

CDV • ETA early 2002

EARTH AND BEYOND

EA • ETA summer 2002

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • Activision 08705 143525 • CDV 020 8880 4144 • Codemasters 01926 814132 • Eidos Interactive 020 8636 3000 • Electronic Arts 01932 450134 • Empire Interactive 020 8343 7337 • EON 0700 4366344 • Infogrames 0161 837 8000 • Interplay 020 7551 4222 • Koch Media 01256 707 767 • Microids 01908 223 377 • Microsoft 08457 002 000 • Midas 01279 858000 • Novalogic 020 7324 8900 • Rage Software 0151 237 2200 • Take 2 Interactive 01753 854 444 • THQ 01483 767656 • Ubi Soft 01932 838 230 • Virgin Interactive 020 7551 4266 • Vivendi 01189 209100

MEET THE TEAM

All PC ZONE's reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What game are you most looking forward to in 2002 and why?

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100%

If a game receives a Classic award in PC ZONE you know that it's going to be brilliant. We reward originality and innovation, but we also rate games that take an existing genre to new heights. It's the experience that counts – if it delivers top-notch entertainment, we'll stamp it with our seal of approval and you should go out and buy it.



80-89%

We don't give out 90% scores willy-nilly and this means that there's a mass of superb games that miss out on the Classic rating. This is where the Award of Excellence comes in, an accolade for a game that we believe is far superior to others in the genre.



70-79%

Our reviews are much more than just a number at the end. If a game scores in this category it's well worth a punt and provides quality entertainment, but make sure you read the text to see why we didn't think it was worthy of an Award of Excellence.

50-69%

We score all our games from a full percentage which means that a score of 50% is an average game – worth considering if you're bored with life and there's no football on the television. Take this closer to the 70% mark and you're looking at a quality game with the ability to impress.

20-49%

These games just about manage to keep their heads above the excrement, but only just and shouldn't be considered unless you've exhausted every other avenue. Why should you waste your time playing games that are sub-standard or below average? You're better off with one of our cover discs.

0-19%

Incompetence, sloth or just a desire to cash in and make an easy buck? Either way, there are no excuses for these games. Avoid at all costs and if possible make a mental note of the developer's name and stick it on your blacklist.



DAVE WOODS

GENRE Shooters, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *AvP2* and *Family Fortunes*



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

GENRE Action, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds*

Duke Nukem Forever. Hang on, didn't I say that last year?

Elite 4, because it's *Elite 4*

CIVILIZATION III

Sid Meier's latest epic

P.60



BATTLE REALMS

Ground-breaking RTS?

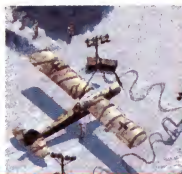
P.64



FEEDBACK

Have your say on the latest games

P.106



REALITY CHECK

Steve Hill grabs his helmet and heads to the motocross track

P.108



REVIEWS POLICY

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day and which ones you should point at and laugh. For that reason, *PC ZONE* works a little differently to any other games magazine.

FINISHED CODE

We only review finished code which is released by the publisher. On occasions this means reviewing from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the box.

HONEST REVIEWING

If there are problems with a game we'll tell you about them even if it means falling foul of some of the big names in the industry. We're not in print to serve as an advertising tool to publishers or big name developers with an ego problem, we're here to give you our honest opinions of a game.

THE REVIEWERS

Our reviewers are the best in the industry both in terms of experience and ability. We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field. You won't find an RTS being reviewed by an FPS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the benchmark titles and knows how each game stands up in the face of the bigger picture.

THE MACHINES

We test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In our office we have access to a wider range of machines from the lowly P233 to the 1.4GHz behemoth. If we spot any aberrations between developer claims and real-life testing we'll let you know.

ONLINE GAMING

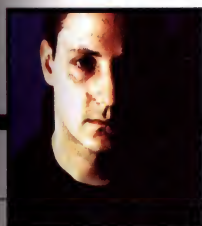
We review a lot of games before they go on sale, which means that it's impossible to properly review the online side of a game simultaneously. Instead of taking a wild guess, or testing it on the comfort of the office LAN, we'll wait until servers are running and then revisit the game in our dedicated online section.

DISAGREE?

After all this you might still disagree with us. If so then write in and complain to our Feedback section, which is where we give you the chance to have your say and where any rumblings are answered by the individual reviewer.

REVIEWS CONTENTS

- 60 CIVILIZATION III**
- 64 BATTLE REALMS**
- 69 SOUL REAVER 2**
- 70 JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL WORLD**
- 72 MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002**
- 75 WORLD WAR III: BLACK GOLD**
- 76 FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE**
- 78 MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE**
- 80 MOTORACER 3**
- 81 BALLISTICS**
- 82 ZOO TYCOON**
- 100 CYCLING MANAGER**
- 100 SILENT HUNTER II**
- 101 THE SIMS: HOT DATE**
- 101 FAMILY FORTUNES**
- 102 REAL WAR**
- 102 PATRICIAN II**
- 104 BUDGET ZONE**
We cast our eyes over the latest arrivals in the bargain bins.
- 106 FEEDBACK**
Your chance to have your say on the games you love and hate the most.
- 108 REALITY CHECK**
Steve Hill gets to grips with real-life motocross.



MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Action, strategy, sport
CURRENTLY PLAYING *AvP2*



ANTHONY HOLDEN
GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Soul Reaver 2* and *Ballistics*



RHIANNA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Stronghold*



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *AvP2*



STEVE HILL
GENRE Management, sport, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Jimmy White's Cueball World* and *Champ Man 01/02*



CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Baldur's Gate*

Unreal II. Read the preview

Galleon. It's got Holden written all over it

Neverwinter Nights. A new evolution in beards

Mafia, because it's a game with lampposts in it

Championship Manager 4. It'll be better than *CM 01/02*

Neverwinter Nights. It could be the biggest RPG of next year

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

£29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

The game that single-handedly created a genre has just entered its third incarnation.

Chris Anderson feels suitably humbled

CIVILIZATION III

The city view. It doesn't do much, but it looks nice.



There can be no doubt that the original *Civ* was one of the most unique and innovative game experiences ever to

appear on PC. Blessed with superficially simple gameplay that hid levels of complexity, it was designed to give players a game that became increasingly more challenging, while at the same time proving highly replayable due to the nature of its gameplay. It was a job well done by Sid Meier and co, and the fact there have been few successful *Civ* clones perhaps shows how difficult it is to make a game of this nature work – *Call To Power II* being the obvious exception to this rule. In fact, *Call To Power II* effectively 'out-Cived' *Civilization II*, and became one of the turn-based strategy games of choice in the PC ZONETop 100 as a result.

Which brings us to *Civilization III*, which is surely the most eagerly anticipated turn-based game ever. How could Firaxis possibly change tack with the latest version of the hit series and



The new city management screen is a lot cleaner.

Graphically, there haven't been any major overhauls, but the visuals have been spruced up.



tell *Call To Power II* where to get off? We had a few ideas about this (see the Perfect Games boxout overleaf), but Firaxis also had quite a few of their own, and while they are not radical changes by any stretch of the imagination (the new features in *Civ III* are not immediately obvious), they have a rather profound effect on how the game develops over time. Of course, there are probably some of you out there who have no clue what the hell I am talking about since you've never played *Civ* in your life, and you're wondering if *Civ III* is the right game to introduce you to grand-scale, turn-based strategy games. The next paragraph, then, is just for you.

IT'S PLAY GOD

Put simply, *Civ* is a huge and complex turn-based resource management game in which you compete with rival civilisations for world supremacy throughout the ages of man. Along the way you will need to build cities to expand your empire, manage all the city buildings and resources, and research technologies which eventually lead to your civilisation taking steps up the evolutionary ladder, hopefully before your opponents do. Military units of whatever time period you are in will be at your disposal if you've done your research homework, and if you become powerful enough in military terms, you will be in a position to do what any self-respecting megalomaniac would do under these circumstances: kick the hell out of all your opponents and win the game.

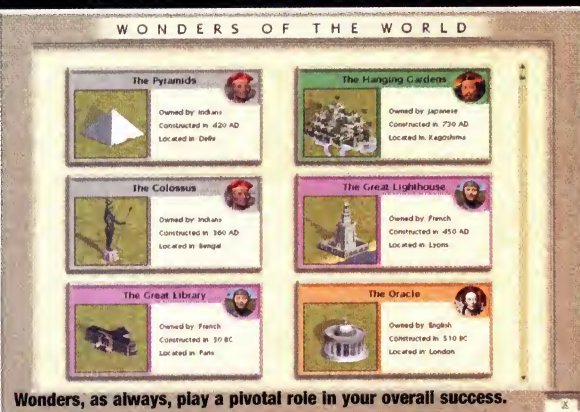
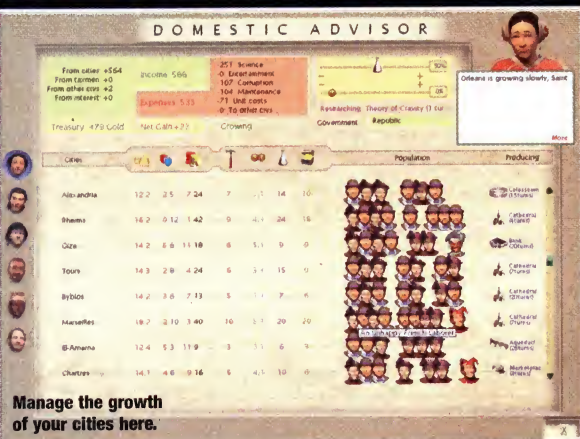
That's more or less what it's all about. However, while *Civilization II* put military conquest at the top of its endgame priorities, *Civilization III* can, if you want it to, be an altogether more peaceful experience. You can use military might to win in *Civ III*, but there

are new winning conditions in place as an alternative. Play as a diplomat and unite the world in peace by becoming world leader and win the game that way, or you can win through sheer domination of your opponents. Another way of winning is through cultural advances, or if you want to be really geeky, by being the first to reach a predetermined score.

While these new winning conditions are welcome as an alternative, we strongly suspect that most players will play the game the same way they always have, by amassing as much military might as they can and wading into the opposition at every opportunity. Apart from the obvious wimpishness of having lots of powerful weapons at your disposal and not actually using any of them, it's hard to believe that playing *Civ* as a peace 'em up will appeal to many people. Either way, the option is now there, so if you're a staunch pacifist you're in luck with *Civ III*.

CIVIL GRAPHICS IMPROVEMENT SHOCKER

As you would expect from a sequel, the graphics have been overhauled. But before you get carried away, the overhaul comes



PERFECT GAMES

The relentless search for the perfect gaming experience continues apace

Having played *Empire Earth* extensively (reviewed PCZ #110), and drawn the obvious comparisons with *Civilization* (*Empire Earth* takes you through mankind's evolution in the same way *Civ* does, but in real time), we have come up with what we consider to be the perfect marriage of gaming styles. The beauty of *Civ* is that it forces you to think about what you are doing and plan ahead. This is the single biggest advantage turn-based games have over their real-time counterparts: they give you time to consider your options. The beauty of *Empire Earth* is, of course, the sheer thrill of real-time combat with a huge variety of units at your disposal. There is no time to think in *Empire Earth*—act fast or die even faster is the hallmark of this great real-time strategy title. Imagine a turn-based game that had *Civ* design values at its core, but when your combat units met the enemy it switched to a real-time strategy screen and you got to fight the battles yourself. Think about how much harder you would ponder which units to make in the turn-based section of the game, knowing that later you would be controlling them in a real-time battle. It seems like a great idea to us, but we know that no publisher is ever going to do it, because it makes too much sense. Bastards.



Wouldn't it be nice to go from something like this...



...to something not entirely dissimilar to this?

in the form of more detailed and animated units, and a more detailed map that makes it easier to spot vital resources and units. Other than that, visually, it's still business as usual for *Civ III*. There is no 'ooh' factor to the graphics, it still looks as flat and one-dimensional as ever, but then graphics never played any part in the appeal of *Civilization*. Strong gameplay has always been the hallmark of the series, and the third incarnation is no exception.

It still plays as well as it ever did, despite the onslaught from the RTS brigade, though you will have to change your tactics a little to succeed in the latest version of Sid's famous digital protégé. Cities now have a sphere of

increasing your culture points, to swallow up enemy cities if they come into your range and you have more culture points than them. The citizens from the enemy city will be attracted by your advanced culture and leave

It's hard to believe that playing *Civ* as a peace 'em up will appeal to many people

influence, and any resources that come under a city's 'reach' are deemed to be yours. The extent to which your city's borders expand is determined by how many culture points you have. Building wonders and city improvements increases your culture points and expands your area of influence. It is perfectly possible, if you put enough of your resources into

the opposition to come and join your cause. Be warned though: you will need very high culture points to achieve this. Perhaps the biggest improvement is the change in attitude from Firaxis towards people we might casually refer to as 'non-*Civ* converts'. You know the ones—they take one look at the interface and run a mile, or if



that doesn't scare them off, the technology tree is sure to do it. Many of the new features in *Civ III* were introduced with these people in mind. The interface looks the same at first, but repeated play reveals a new system where players can do almost anything from the main map without having to wade through one sub-menu after another. The layout of the advisor screen has changed so the information received is just as useful but comes in a more simplified format, again, sub-menus are avoided. The technology tree itself has been trimmed down to a large degree. Rather than pondering over it for an age deciding which direction to take your research, you will most likely spend seconds in there rather than minutes since the choices are now more limited. This makes for a faster game in many respects, and you will find yourself advancing to new areas of technology much quicker than in previous *Civ* titles. The Civlopedia has been revamped heavily too, and is now much easier to navigate. Finding information on whatever part of the game is puzzling you is literally a mouse click or two away and the layout of the Civlopedia is much cleaner. In fact, this can be said about the presentation of the game in general – Firaxis has put a clear emphasis on making it

easy to do anything you want to do, so you can concentrate on the game itself instead of struggling with the interface.

None of these changes will alienate the hardcore *Civ* fan as the later stages of the game are just as complex and rife with decision-making dilemmas as ever. It's just easier to get to the meat of the game than it ever was before. Aside from the light cosmetic makeover and interface revamp, there are many neat touches to be found throughout *Civ III*. Increased control over combat with more options on how you defend and attack, and the ability to bring Elite units to Leader status have been included. It's possible, through your Leaders, to join your units together and form a massive army for increased attack output. Each civilisation also has a unique unit which will prove useful at a particular stage of the game – the Americans for example have F15s during modern times which give them an obvious advantage in aerial battles.

Civ III then, is just as addictive, although those of you expecting radical changes or a different gameplay experience to earlier games in the series will be clearly disappointed. While the visual improvements and new features are clearly welcome, they don't drastically affect the gameplay

IN PERSPECTIVE

There isn't much to choose between *Civ III* and *Call To Power II* since they are basically the same game save for a few gameplay and presentation quirks, but *Civ III* has a lot more to offer the casual gamer. *Civ II* is history now, but it's out on budget so if you haven't tried a *Civ*-type game you might want to start with that one. The closest real-time equivalent is *Empire Earth*.

Civ III

Empire Earth

Call To Power II

Civ II

experience, but seasoned *Civ* veterans wouldn't have it any other way. This is *Civ*, pure and simple, or as Talking Heads would have put it, 'same as it ever was'. They're not wrong. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium II 300 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** 64Mb RAM will give you smoother play

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS New user-friendly interface • Improved visuals and animations • As addictive as ever

DOWNERS Endgame can still be a slog • Not radically different to *Civ II* • No multiplayer option

86 The more things change, the more they stay the same

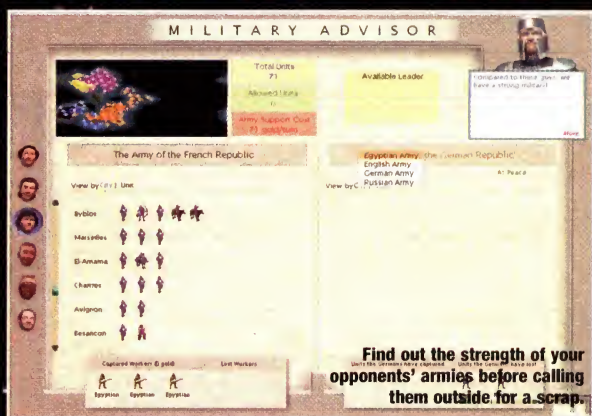
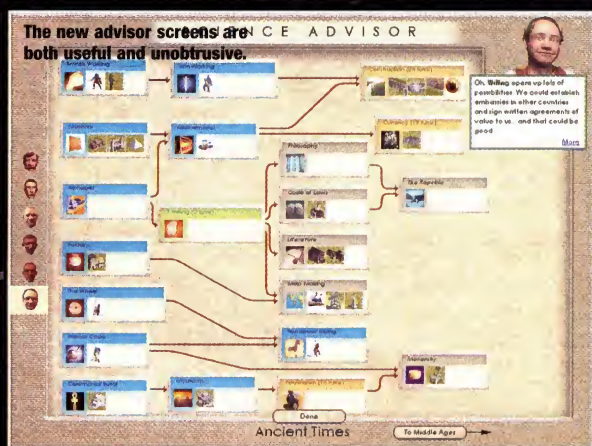
AT HOME ALONE

Multiplayer *Civ III* misses initial release

Civ III will not be shipping with a multiplayer option. Firaxis says there may be a patch later that offers a multiplayer option, but this has yet to be confirmed. We have no idea why they haven't included online head-to-head play, since *Civ* is just about perfect for this kind of thing (as are most turn-based games by their very nature). It's not a major disaster; the single-player game is strong enough to warrant your cash by itself, but we have our hopes that the fabled multiplayer patch will make an appearance sometime soon.



No multiplayer *Civ III* just yet, but there's hope.





Some swordsmen have an arse-scratching contest.



Peasants run to put out the flames with buckets of water.

BATTLE REALMS



★ £34.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Keeping it real in the realms of RTS: Keith Pullin

Tedious plot. Laborious tutorial. Terrible cut-scenes. There can be no doubt that *Battle Realms* is cursed with some shocking presentation, which is hardly the best way to get things started. Thankfully this resilient offering developed by Liquid Entertainment also boasts some of the most enjoyable gameplay you are ever likely to come across in a fantasy RTS. So, for once we'll forgive those initial shortcomings and refrain from mentioning them again... well, we might do, but we'll keep it confined to captions. How's that?

LANDING ON YOUR FEET

RTS developers are always banging on about how the cunning use of landscape is the key to victory – *BR* is another title with this boast hanging around its neck like a concrete necklace. Initially, it has to be said that like most other RTSs it makes no difference as to whether you're in a forest, up to your waist in a swamp or on top of a mountain – the fact is you can get by without paying that much attention.

However, as you progress through the game it becomes apparent that for the four warring clans (Dragon, Lotus, Serpent and Wolf) the landscape is truly both your ally and foe. Units attacking from high ground really do have a huge advantage over the suckers below; forests provide the extra cover they should (while also hindering archers) and rivers slow you down. Weather also plays its part with rain causing havoc among troops.

BALANCING THE EQUATION

On the plus side a good downpour makes your rice grow faster. OK,

so your armies won't see the immediate benefits up on the front line, but if that same rain extinguishes burning buildings and saves your peasants from watering the rice manually, there will at least be

“The Wolf Clan even eat horses, but you don't want to know about that”

somebody who appreciates Mother Nature's gift.

At this point it might be worth mentioning that resource management is a large part of the game, though in a way which differs from the traditional RTS.

The main resources of rice and water have multiple uses. Water, for example, is used in the construction of buildings and troops, yet it can also be used to put out fires and soak rice crops when the weather is hot.

battle or around the village to collect other resources. The Wolf Clan even eat horses, but you don't want to know about that.

GREAT CHEMISTRY

The most innovative feature in *Battle Realms* is its unit alchemy. By this we mean the ability to cross-train units in a number of different skills. For example, if you create a swordsman, he doesn't have to remain a mere swordsman. A visit to the target range will also endow him with long-range capability, though, of course, his original skill remains unchanged. And it doesn't have to

★ WALKTHROUGH

FROM BOREDOM TO BATTLE: A PEASANT'S TALE

There are loads of different warriors to create in *Battle Realms*. Here's an idea of how it's done...



1 A peasant's life is not particularly interesting. Take young Bryan here: he can collect rice and water and construct a few buildings but that's about it. What Bryan needs is some action and adventure.



2 Bored and in need of a skinful, Bryan wanders into a local tavern and suddenly with the help of beer and foul language his dull life is transformed. The once peaceful peasant emerges from the boozier a changed man.



3 Not content with swinging a rusty old blade, Bryan the Swordsman slips into the alchemist hut. Once again the change is astounding. The fidgety warrior has become a fire-hurling lunatic in a single afternoon.

Watch towers gain special powers depending on the unit placed up there.



stop there. You can add an even more explosive edge to your soldier's tailored battle prowess by training them in something like the alchemist hut.

Buildings can also be powered up to give units improved accuracy, armour, damage and more. In fact, some of the abilities up for grabs are unfashionably eclectic by the usual PC strategy game standards. Let's face it, when was the last time a geisha girl with a metal fan satisfied your bloodlust? This game contains more than its fair share of units, gadgets and gimmickry, and credit is due for the imagination shown in doing so.

Unfortunately, in order to create really powerful units like the Necromancer you have to be a master of lightning-quick micro-management as you move warriors from one building to another. Couple this with simultaneously trying to fight a battle and you're in for a fairly panicky orgy of mouse clicks and curses. Admittedly, you can set a

rally point for one building inside another to create a kind of chain effect, so it's not all bad news. Still, if like myself, you rely on keyboard shortcuts to get you through most RTSs, don't be surprised if you find yourself struggling with *BR*. Be wary of multiplayer games too – our online opponents showed no mercy whatsoever as we struggled to come to terms with the interface. It really does nothing for your confidence.

BUSH TACTICS

Respect has to go to those responsible for the unit animation. Everything from ambient and walking movements (apart from the musketeers who walk like girls) to the spell-casting and the swordplay is exquisite. Watching battles is like watching a Bruce Lee film – the amount of moves these guys come out with is staggering.



You even get little frogs bouncing around near lakes, and there are birds and squirrels and... well, needless to say it generates a stunning atmosphere. This attention to detail is not just for show either. Disturbing a flock of birds as you creep through a forest can actually alert smart

Nothing quite like murdering a peasant in his rice field.



Another watch tower crumbles under the Wolf clan's fiery bombardiers.



The Wolf clan show they are not to be trifled with.



END



4 But still he wants more. After a brief but intensive session on the target range Bryan exits the building with a crazed look in his eye. His journey from peasant to fighting legend is nearly complete.



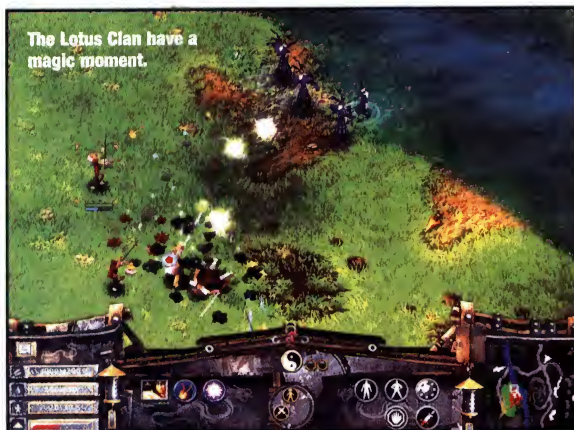
5 And still there are options for Bryan. He can go to the stables and get himself a mare to ride, or head off to the metal shop for some special abilities. Sadly a mad barbarian beheaded Bryan later that day. Life sucks.



Landscapes are varied and well designed.



in the multiplayer game you can choose to play as any of the four sides.



The Lotus Clan have a magic moment.



Push a unit down a hill and it can crush everything in its path.



The amount of moves and abilities gives Battle Realms a distinct RPG feel.

CAN'T SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

More than any other RTS, *Battle Realms* relies on the landscape to create a realistic battle environment. For example, fighting in the middle of a forest is a stupid thing to do if your army consists of nothing but ranged attack units. Their ballistics will never get through all the tree trunks and branches, and will doubtless have little effect on your adversaries. The smart move in this kind of situation is to use stealthy bandits and creep up on your enemies. Cunning eh?

Terrain can give you a massive advantage.



enemies to your presence. And vice versa. If you spot birds taking off or the telltale signs of wildlife scuttling from the undergrowth, chances are you're about to be clobbered.

AI is another major coup for the game. The other clans always attack at your weakest point and are very capable of enticing your forces into craftily conceived ambushes. Even the pathfinding is faultless. There's no doubt

about it – *Battle Realms* has had some serious thought put into it.

SOUNDS THOUGHTFUL

Use of sound is also excellent. The echoes of clashing steel and squelchy thuds as sliced limbs drop to the floor enhance the already bloody atmosphere no end. The background music is also suitably oriental, with panpipes and drums gliding from threatening tones to blissful tranquility with melodic ease – similar to *Black & White* in fact.

There are other hints of *Black & White* with the plot decisions you have to make. Right at the start of the game you are asked to either save a village from massacre or join in the heartless debauchery yourself. This decision sets the tone for the rest of the game. In other words, if you save the villagers you will fight for the good Dragon Clan – and if you kill them you'll lead the evil Serpent Clan.

And although *Battle Realms* is played in a relatively linear level-by-level fashion, you also

get multiple-choice routes through the world map. Some routes will take you towards the magic-using Lotus Clan whereas others pitch you against more simple foes like the Wolf Clan. Basically no one game is ever the same.

CLASSIC RTS?

When it comes down to it, you have to say *Battle Realms* is a ground-breaking PC strategy game. It contains original, well-thought-out ideas with beautiful use of graphics and sound. Is it a classic though? Well, no.

The unit alchemy interface needs work on its flexibility, and then of course there are those problems we mentioned at the start of the review, which we promised we wouldn't talk about. Still, these are minor irritations in what is otherwise a top-quality game. *Battle Realms* is good, honest entertainment and a great advert for the continuation of the RTS genre. **PC**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 400
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES**
600Mb HD space, 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY**
PIII 800 with 128Mb RAM, 700Mb HD
space and 16Mb graphics card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Ground-breaking • Excellent gameplay • Beautiful sound and graphics • Brilliant unit alchemy idea • Great landscape features • Great open-ended feel

DOWNERS Tedious plot • Laborious tutorial • Terrible cut-scenes • No keyboard shortcuts for creating units.

86 Compulsive, enjoyable and original

IN PERSPECTIVE

Battle Realms is what *100 Swords* should have been, and is on a par with *Z: Steel Soldiers* in terms of pure quality. Still, *BR* easily surpasses *Empire Earth* and gameplay-wise has a similar feel to *Ground Control*.

BATTLE REALMS

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

GROUND CONTROL

EMPIRE EARTH

100 SWORDS

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MAX PAYNE
BLACK & WHITE
UNREAL TOURNAMENT
COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2
MIDTOWN MADNESS 2
OPERATION FLASHPOINT
EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE
BALDUR'S GATE II: THRONE OF BHAAL
DIABLO II: LORDS OF DESTRUCTION
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MECHWARRIOR IV: BLACK KNIGHT
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RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
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 EMPIRE EARTH
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 HALF LIFE BLUE SHIFT
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 OPERATION FLASHPOINT
 QUAKE 3 ARENA
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 RED FACTION
 RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
 SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR
 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
 SPIDER MAN
 STAR TREK ARMADA 2
 STAR WARS GALACTIC BATTLEFIELDS
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 TRIBES 2
 UNREAL TOURNAMENT

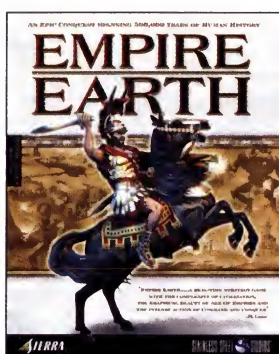


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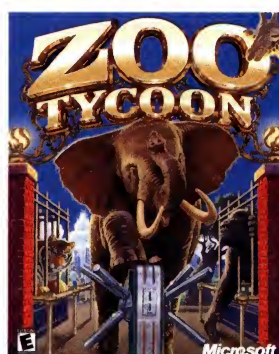
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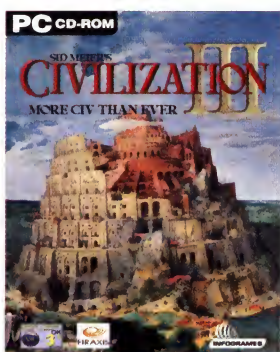
EMPIRE EARTH



ZOO TYCOON



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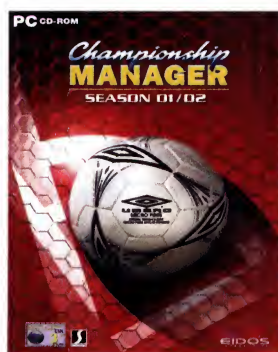
CIVILIZATION III



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(Some games are just too important to risk using a 56k modem)

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SOUL REAVER 2

£29.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

"It's not console rubbish, it's not!"

snivelled Anthony Holden

I'll be perfectly honest with you. We were expecting this sequel to the first *Soul Reaver* outing, *Legacy Of Kain* (itself a follow-up to 1996's *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain*) to be pretty much more of the same. Sure there'd be a suitably next-gen graphical overhaul, but on the whole it would be a rushed job designed to meet the PS2's first big Christmas season. For this we owe developer Crystal Dynamics our sincerest apologies, as nothing could be further from the truth.

The first *Soul Reaver* was a surprisingly decent action/adventure outing, offering a refreshingly considered approach to a much-abused formula. It also introduced us to long-suffering protagonist Raziel, one of the genre's darker and more likeable heroes. However, what we couldn't possibly have foreseen was that the whole thing was just a protracted scene-setting exercise for the real meat of the franchise: *Soul Reaver 2*.

Where the first game was concerned mainly with obtaining new abilities and using them to solve fairly rudimentary puzzles, the sequel begins with a fully equipped Raziel, picking up precisely where the other game left off. Consequently, the designers have been forced to be far cleverer with the gameplay, further expanding Raziel's

repertoire of skills, but also using the existing variables far more ingeniously. The result is an exceedingly polished and enjoyable game that excels in practically every department.

A SOUL-SUCKING TALE

Possibly the most surprising aspect of *Soul Reaver 2* is the storyline. While the dialogue is absurdly overblown at times, on

help and deceive you by turns, and there's a refreshing lack of moral transparency at work. It's commendable to see such robust storytelling in a game that's essentially console-oriented.

The puzzles themselves are also extremely well constructed, if occasionally a little on the easy side, but there are more than enough variables to keep things interesting throughout. For a start there's the plane-shifting – Raziel's capacity to move between the material and

“While the dialogue is absurdly overblown at times, on the whole it's a compelling, intricate and well-paced yarn”

the whole it's a compelling, intricate and well-paced yarn that actually keeps you guessing. Each of the major characters with whom you interact appears to

spectral realms at will. This device functions on several levels, and is just one indication of the expertise evident in the game's design. Most significantly

You can't rely too much on the Reaver – let it become aroused and it will take a slug out of your health.



On top of everything, it's a bloody nice looking game too.

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

it's a puzzle-solving tool, each major puzzle area requiring you to shift planes in order to take advantage of different abilities and environmental features available in each realm. But it also functions as a punishment for 'dying' in the material plane, as life in the spectral plane is generally crippling to progress in and far less fun, as you can't interact with objects or use physical weapons. Thirdly, of course, it's a hugely aesthetically pleasing feature of the game, as shifting planes sees the environment morph fantastically around you in real time.

I'M REAVING TODAY

There's also the eponymous reaver itself, a symbiotic weapon immutably linked to Raziel. The reaver can be imbued with a variety of powers (light, darkness, fire and air), adding another level of depth to the puzzle mechanics, as well as being Raziel's most potent weapon. Refreshingly, the frequent combat in *Soul Reaver 2* is rewarding in its own right, with a satisfying dodge-and-counter dynamic that makes battles consistently enjoyable.

There are countless other praiseworthy features that I could mention given the space, but instead I'll simply assure you that, generic in nature though it may be, this is still one of the most consistently entertaining

IN PERSPECTIVE

Soul Reaver 2 is a more openly console-styled outing than any of these alternatives, and accordingly lacks some of their complexity, yet remains a hugely enjoyable, well-crafted game. *Severance* has more depth of combat but otherwise bores, *Eden* is clever but flawed, and though *MGS* is a superior game, it converted poorly to the PC.

Soul Reaver 2

Severance

Project Eden

Metal Gear Solid

and elegantly constructed games I have played in a long time. Indeed, it's among one of the finest action/adventures available on the PC. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 450
Memory 128Mb **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PIII 600 and a
32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Exceptional, twist-ridden storyline • Satisfying combat system • Plane-shifting and soul-devouring
DOWNERS Occasionally awkward control system • Slightly dumbed-down puzzles

86 A remarkably well-executed and likeable game



Being immortal is about to come in very handy.

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL WORLD

★ £29.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

Considering he recently beat the man at pool, it seems only fair that *Steve Hill* reviews his game

Where's the strangest place you've ever played pool? Wales? France? Chances are you've never racked up on a desert island. How about a quick frame among the majestic ruins of Angkor Wat? Stonehenge at the dead of night? A gently listing boat in Hong Kong harbour? We're guessing not. Why? Well, for starters, there are no pool tables there.

Welcome to *Jimmy White's Cueball World*, where the previous words are a lie. Not content with a traditional snooker room, this third incarnation of the series also places you in some of the most exotic locations on the planet, and enables you to play snooker, pool

or billiards. And that's it. No exploring, no mixing with the natives, nothing but knocking balls into holes with a stick. Fair enough. The argument is that if you're going to play pool all day, you might as well do it somewhere scenic. Of course, there's an alternative argument that suggests having pretty much perfected the green baize antics in *Jimmy White's Cueball 2*, there was nowhere else for the series to go (other than around the world).

Cynics could suggest that simply having tables in different locations is stretching things a bit, and those cynics would probably appreciate a website called Jump The Shark. Named after such an incident in an episode of *Happy Days*, it chronicles the moment

when TV shows go downhill due to the introduction of an absurd gimmick. If there were an equivalent site for games, then *Cueball World* would have to be an early contender. Ironically, sharks do actually crop up in the game.

UNDER THE SEA

Ultimately, you have to ask whether having a frame of pool in a super-villain's underwater lair makes it a better frame of pool? We would suggest not, but by the same token it doesn't make it any worse, and it does at least give you something to look at while your opponent is mulling over his next shot. And to be honest, you're going to need it. The game may be endorsed by The Whirlwind, but some of the computer opponents are firmly in the doldrums, exhibiting pace more readily associated with vintage Cliff Thorburn, a painfully slow player despite his well-publicised cocaine intake. It's just about bearable over the course of a frame of pool, but if you're thinking of tackling a game of snooker, then a good book is advisable.

JIMMY, JIMMY

The White stuff

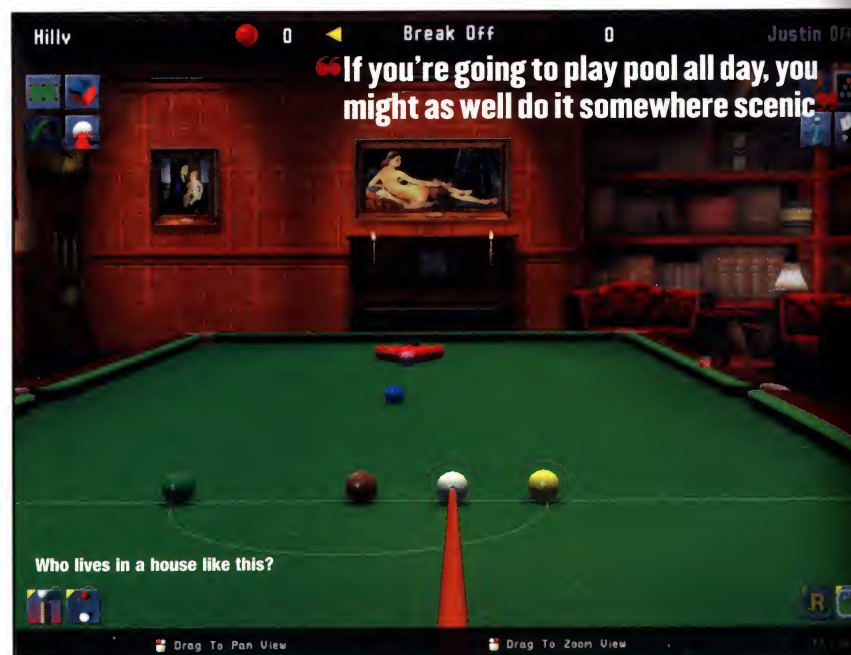
To the untrained eye, it may appear that the endorsement of Jimmy White is nothing more than a shrewd exercise in garnering magazine coverage. While this is undeniably the case (as we've proven ourselves), his involvement stretches to far more than having his mug on the box. With over two decades at the pinnacle of snooker, Jimmy knows a thing or two about potting balls, and he's on hand to impart this invaluable advice to the player. Between frames, Jimmy appears in an extremely loud suit offering either words of wisdom regarding the debacle he has just witnessed, or encouragement at the supreme display of potting. It's a nice idea, but due to a combination of rosy video footage, Jimmy's strong South London accent, and the fact that he's clearly been at the drinks cabinet, it often borders on the unintelligible. We've managed to decipher a few gems though, including "Try experimenting with a bit of spin," "That all went a bit pear-shaped, didn't it?" and of course, "Blame the chalk." Cheers, Jimmy.



The Hand starring Michael Caine, anyone?



If you've never been to Hong Kong, it looks a little bit like this.

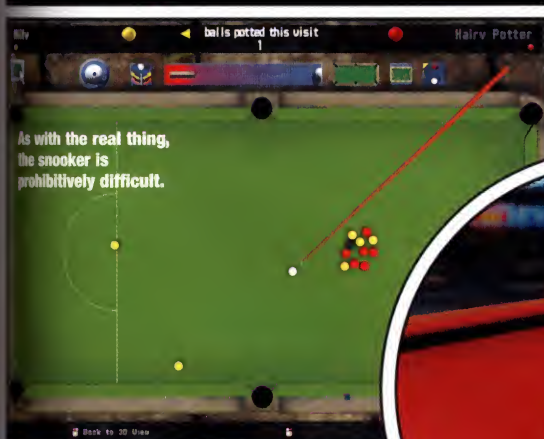




"Gaaaaaame, shot and the second leg to Jockyyyyy..."



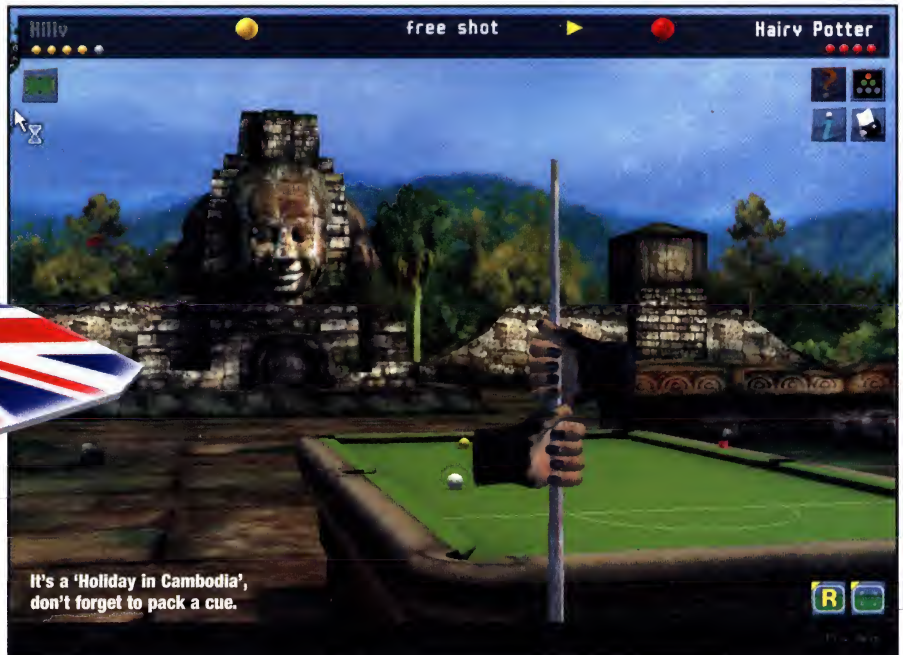
A passable diversion, but by no means a deal-clincher.



As with the real thing, the snooker is prohibitively difficult.



Pool in a basketball court? Hmm...



It's a 'Holiday in Cambodia', don't forget to pack a cue.

As with the real thing, it's all good fun when you're at the table, and the control system is manageable enough, offering a variety of approaches. Numerous camera angles are on offer, and you can get up close and personal with the balls, or simply take an overhead view, thus negating the lush scenery. For those who prefer the tactile approach, the cue can be operated manually by sliding the mouse at the required

pace. It's hit and miss, but undeniably satisfying when you get it right. Alternatively, a more scientific outlook is catered for, with a power bar allied to dotted lines enabling you to plan each shot meticulously. Spin is of course available, but it's a tricky business and often more trouble than it's worth. Also bear in mind that you have to chalk your cue between your shots, a rather incongruous intrusion of reality, particularly in light of the fact you are playing disembodied hands of varying weirdness.

WHAT A SPORT!

As well as the regular action, a host of sub-games are on offer, including maze puzzles, trick tables and even thumb wrestling. They provide a passable diversion for five minutes, but are all overshadowed by the majestic darts game, which is almost worth the admission fee alone. Select your flights, choose between 501, 301 and Round

the Clock, and you're away. It's all there, the scraping of chalk against board, the dull thud of an arrow embedding itself in felt, and even the occasional bounce-out. All that's missing is a Sid Waddell commentary and a Lakeside full of pissed-up, chain-smoking white trash. We demand an Embassy World Championship edition immediately.

But we digress. You probably want to know whether you should consider buying *Jimmy White's Cueball World*. This depends on a number of factors. Do you have 30 quid to spare? Can you overcome the stigma of playing pool on a computer? And crucially, do you own the previous version? While it's undeniably an impressive package, it's a keen fan that will have this sat next to *Jimmy White's Cueball 2* on the shelf, particularly as that game is now available on budget. You pays your money, you takes your choice. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM PII 333 RAM 64Mb
ALSO REQUIRES 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** P500, 128Mb RAM and a decent 3D card

IN PERSPECTIVE

Once the physics have been perfected, there's not a great deal you can do with a snooker or pool game. This isn't a particularly great leap forward from the previous game, and some people in these parts also prefer a bit of *Virtual Pool 3*.

Jimmy White's Cueball World

Jimmy White's Cueball 2

Virtual Pool 3

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Spot-on physics • Eight elaborate locations • Superb darts game • Internet play
DOWNERS Gimmicky • Slow opponents • No great advance on previous version

76 A load of balls



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002: PROFESSIONAL EDITION

★ £69.99 (Standard Edition £49.99) • Microsoft • Out now

It's from Microsoft. It's a flight sim. It's Microsoft Flight Sim! Dave Mathieson gets all excited

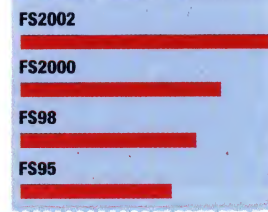
Along with all the serious stuff, there has been an awful lot of crap written about the horrific events of September 11, like made-up Nostradamus predictions and supposed 'spooky' messages in the Wingdings font in Microsoft Word. Most non-thick people immediately spot this kind of rubbish and ignore it. But when it occurred to some hack somewhere that *Microsoft Flight*

Simulator features both planes and the World Trade Center, it seemed like an easy opportunity to link two of the media's favourite bogeymen – international terrorism and computer games – with the implication that the hijackers could have used the software to rehearse their attacks. A load of old cobblers, maybe, but the 'story' allegedly gained enough attention to cause Microsoft to delay the latest release of *Flight Simulator*. So here it is – late, hopefully better, and minus the Twin Towers.

Just in case you didn't know, the *Microsoft Flight Simulator* series lets you fly several civilian aircraft over basically the entire world. This concept will either intrigue you with its open-ended approach and sheer scale, or bore the pants off you with its complete lack of things to kill and general gameplay. But with a pedigree dating back to the birth of the PC, it's hard to deny that it's a winning formula, and each new version has brought more airports, more planes and improved graphics. *FS2002* has all these, as well as a couple of improvements on the gameplay side of things.

INPERSPECTIVE

The *Flight Simulator* series is close to being in a genre of its own. So we're going to compare the last four versions, obviously taking into account the expectations of the time. *FS95* was the first Windows version, *FS2000* was a bit slow, *FS98* was first with hardware acceleration, but *FS2002* is the most complete yet.

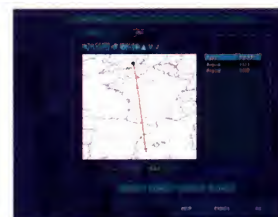


Enabling all of the 747's panels can leave you with very little windscreen space.

WALKTHROUGH

COME FLY WITH ME (TO IBIZA)

At this time of year, what could be better than taking the Learjet down to Ibiza for a little get-together?

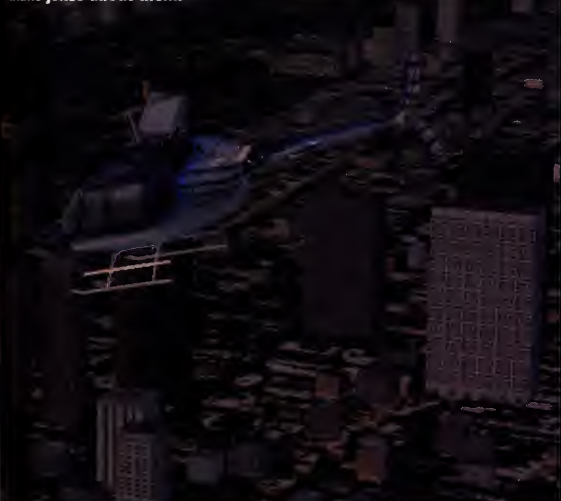


1 *FS2002* lets you plan your own flights. We've picked our start and destination and let the planner sort out the route for us.



2 We start off on a cold London morning parked at the Heathrow terminal. We have to communicate with the tower and taxi to our runway.

It's a pity that it's not as easy to fly a chopper as it is to make jokes about them.



A NEW CESSNA? WHOOPY-BLOODY-DO

So what exactly is so good about this latest version? Well for starters you get to fly a few new planes, the most interesting being the Cessna 208 Caravan Amphibian (lands on water) and Boeing 747-400 (big).

As already mentioned, one of the biggest strengths of *FS2002* is the go-anywhere freedom that it gives you. The much-improved user interface makes it very easy to select your nearest airfield, pick a plane, time of day and weather, and then take off and try and find your house. But if you can't be arsed to do this, there are tons of pre-defined flights that you can choose from. These are grouped into

categories rather like mini-careers. In one, you get to chauffeur a novelist around New England for the summer, in another you're an airline pilot ferrying your cargo of sweaty businessmen around Europe in a 737. This stuff may sound a bit tame when you compare it to intercepting a Luftwaffe raid in your Spitfire, but the sheer atmosphere more than makes up for any lack of action or glamour in the 'missions'. And *FS2002* has a couple of new features that add to this atmosphere in rather a big way.

HELLO... IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?

One of the biggest complaints about earlier versions was the lack of anybody else in your virtual world. Microsoft has addressed this in *FS2002* by adding air traffic control (ATC) and AI-controlled planes in the skies. The ATC is excellent, and flying a busy route like London-Paris is peppered with authentic-sounding radio chat. The interface is simple – you basically use the 1-9 number keys to pick from a context-sensitive menu. My only whinge is that all the voices have American

accents, even Welsh air traffic controllers.

The other planes in the sky also add to the immersion, although unlike combat sims, the emphasis in *FS2002* is obviously on staying as far away from other planes as possible, so they're not usually more than dots with flashing lights on them.

ARE THE GRAPHICS ANY COP, THEN?

One of the worst things about reading a review of a new flight sim is the creeping realisation that you're probably going to have to buy a new PC to enjoy all the lovely graphical enhancements that it offers. But *FS2002* is pretty ground-breaking in that it has better graphics than *Flight Sim 2000*, and it actually runs faster. The fancy new Autogen scenery generator adds lots more trees and buildings to the world below you, the ground scenery and lighting effects have been much improved (but there are none of those huge, disk-churning pauses every time you switch views), and the frame-rates are better. Hurrah.

MILE-HIGH CLUB

Previous versions of *MS Flight Sim* have always had plenty going for them, but they've lacked a certain amount of polish. This definitely doesn't apply to *FS2002*. The Professional Edition offers you extra flight logging and an opportunity to link up with an instructor online. On top of this, you also get gMax – a 3D modelling tool which lets you design your own planes – and a couple of extra planes. *FS2002* is bigger, better, and faster and if you've ever wondered what pilots get up to when the seat-belt light goes off, now's your chance to find out. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
750Mb HD space, 8Mb 3D graphics
card **WE SAY** PIII 800 with 256Mb
RAM, 32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS** Extra planes • Improved graphics • Air traffic control • Much more immersive than the last one
- DOWNERS** Still a bit dull for some • Needs loads of hard disk space

88 A big improvement (86 per cent for Standard Edition)

Hong Kong at sunrise. How lovely.

NYC without the Twin Towers looks pretty weird.



FS2002 has new planes, like this Cessna floatplane.



END



3 When we get there, we ask for takeoff clearance before setting rip.



4 Off we go up into the crappy London air. ATC will point us in the right direction...



5 ...but navigation is easy anyway with the on-board GPS. The big green line tells us where we want to go.



6 Aaaah – Ibiza. All that stands between us and a weekend of banging choons is a successful landing. Which lever works the wheels again?

PC CD-ROM



"KICK" HERE TO GET STARTED

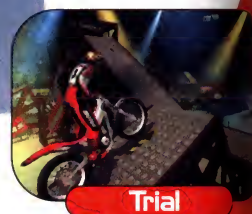
M3
MOTORACER

Delphine Software International, Moto Racer, the Delphine Software International and Moto Racer 3 logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Delphine Software International.

Distribué par



6 different styles
Up to 8 players via LAN or the Internet
15 real tracks
40 bikes
Incredibly true to life



WORLD WAR III: BLACK GOLD

★ £29.99 • JoWood • Out now

"The end is nigh, we're all going to die!" screams *Richie Shoemaker*. Not before you review this, we tell him

Despite the rhetoric, some would have us believe that far from securing world peace, Allied forces went into Kuwait to keep Western cars on the road. Indeed, aside from revenge there are also economic reasons for cuffing the Afghans, namely, the proposed Trans-Afghan pipeline, which, in 1997, the US State Department said

they would finance if the warring factions of Afghanistan would somehow unite. Spooky, innit?

But I digress. In much the same way that ancient armies marched on their stomachs, today's high-tech forces drive about on their fuel tanks. Without oil, an organised military force is little more than a rabble, and so it is that in *WWIII* the aim is to secure oil fields, from which you

pot credits, which in turn can be used to purchase equipment. Each strategy game must have its Tiberium, and here it is oil.

THREE TRIBES COLLIDE

And so, as the USA you must successfully invade Iraq. As Iraq you'll be looking to stop the infidels and as the Russians you must do a bit of both. It's hardly what we might call World War III – 'Gulf War II' might be a more suitable title. And while the setting may be eerily close to current reality, despite its contemporary background, the controversial release of *WWIII* reveals a formulaic and rather traditional strategy game.

Each side has tanks, jeeps, choppers and dozens of buildings, and you fight across deserts, mountainous and arctic regions through day and night. But, where you might think that as the US you might command aerial superiority, or as Iraq you might be able to defend your bases with POWs or Western journalists, each side seems fairly even in battle. While there's nothing wrong with that, if you're after a strategy game whose title suggests civilian casualties in the millions and hundreds of men running around in camouflaged gimp suits, you're sure to be a little disappointed.

"The release of *WWIII* reveals a formulaic and rather traditional strategy game"

EARTH AND BEYOND

Despite the game's reliance on the *Earth 2150* engine, *WWIII* seems a comparatively lightweight game. The three campaigns are entirely linear compared to *Earth's* dynamic construction and the underground tunnels through which you launch the odd surprise attack seem an odd feature to have left in. The ability to design your own units is also one of the game's hangover features, although only available to skirmish and multiplayer battles. On the plus side, *WWIII* shares a common interface, a rather good one at that, providing one of the few 3D strategy games where controlling the camera is less of a struggle than the actual game.

Graphically the game is both impressive and shoddy. The explosions and lighting effects



are suitable nourishment, but like *Earth 2150* and *The Moon Project* the units and buildings have that *Blue Peter* look about them, as if each has been cut out from an empty cereal box and coloured in with poster paint.

feels dry. It's hard to care for a force of poorly modelled vehicles, each about as convincing as a Scalextric car, set among shoddy cardboard environments. If you're after realism, political manoeuvring and nuclear paranoia, watch CNN. If you want a strategy game offering weapons of mass destruction, get *Red Alert 2*. *WWIII: Black Gold*, despite the promise of epic global destruction, will end its days in anonymity, let down by a lack of ambition more than anything else. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
D3D graphics card **WE SAY** PIII 500 and
64Mb RAM will help, but *WWIII* works
surprisingly well on low-spec PCs

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Very good 3D interface •
Topical contemporary setting • Nukes
DOWNERS Unoriginal • Generally
poor 3D graphics • Tired mission
design

65 War is stupid and people
are stupid

IN PERSPECTIVE

Simple: *Red Alert 2* does nukes better, *Combat Zone* is more realistic when it comes to modern warfare and *Earth 2150* is older and wiser than its contemporary cousin.

WWIII: Black Gold

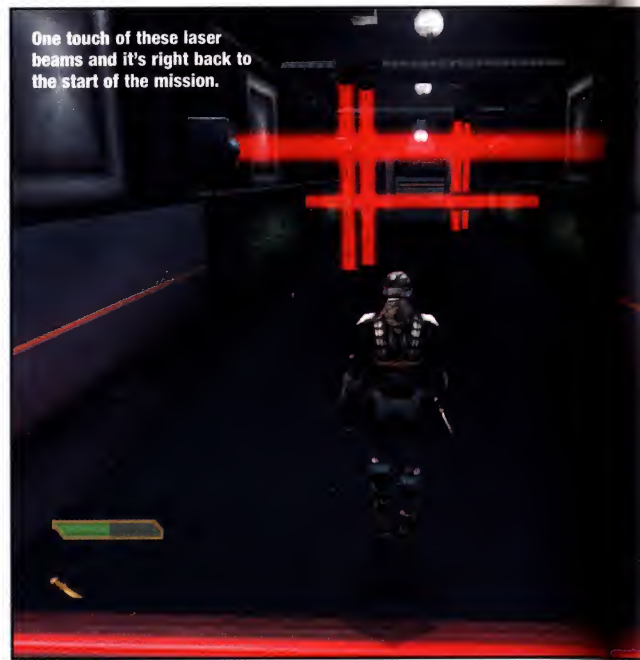
C&C: Red Alert 2

Earth 2150

Combat Zone



Look round corners in pure *Metal Gear* style.



One touch of these laser beams and it's right back to the start of the mission.

FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

★ £29.99 • Cryo • Out now

Author Frank Herbert has sold millions of books, but does he really have his own dune? Mark Hill is left with a mouthful of sand

Dune seems to be enjoying a bit of a resurgence as of late. The film has been re-released on DVD with an extra 40 minutes of footage, they've made a big budget TV adaptation, Westwood revisited the sci-fi classic in its latest blockbuster and now French developer Widescreen Games is having a stab at an action/adventure.

It has always seemed odd that such a character-driven story has

seen its most successful game translation in Westwood's real-time strategies. But this isn't the first time Cryo has released a *Dune* title. The 1992 adventure/RPG was a real underrated corker.

This time, the fact that the name of the author is in the title is supposed to indicate that it's a faithful recreation of the book (or at least the world described in the series of books) and is thus not David Lynch's *Dune*, that expensive mess of a movie that was both hypnotic and utterly

ridiculous, despite being made by one of my favourite directors. But that doesn't make this game a triumph. For everything it does right, equally it does something wrong: the graphics are great

“Like Lynch's film, it doesn't really work and yet is strangely compelling”

but, the locations monotonous and lacking in detail. The animation is fluid and believable but the horrid controls make your

character move like a psychotic duck. The story is rich and complex but the way it's incorporated into the gameplay is crude and dull. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

WATER IS LIFE

Dune is a curious beast. Ignored when it was first published in the '60s, it became a monster

dweller on the planet of Dune, as he realises his potential and becomes the Christ-like Paul Muad'dib. To do this you have to complete a series of straightforward missions and watch a lot of cut-scenes. This has to be the first gripe. There's nothing worse than trying to get on with a game only to find the screen becoming letterboxed and having to sit through a lot of talking. At least the acting is of a consistently high standard.


More problematic is the structure of the gameplay. You start off in the rather tiny Fremen subterranean city. Here you have to speak to certain characters, usually the same three or four, and collect the items they give you. After that you're sent out on a mission where you have to kill some guards and press some buttons, before going back to the city and repeating the whole process all over again.

The missions do have a *Metal Gear Solid*, *Hitman* feel to them. Ammo is in short supply so you need to use your knife as often as you can and, since it's useless once you've been detected, this means a real emphasis on stealth. But the action is hampered by an awkward control method (move around with the cursor and control the camera with the mouse). You do get used to it after a while, but in the middle of a shoot-out you usually end up facing the wrong direction all too often.

ALL ABOUT PAUL

Who's the real Messiah?

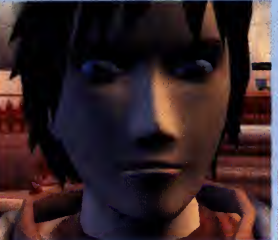
We haven't seen the new TV version of *Dune*, but in our minds there is only one true Paul Atreides, and that is Kyle MacLachlan. The TV Alec Stewart, also known for his work in *sod all else*, looks like he should be in a Gillette ad while the game version is too much of a doe-eyed idiot to be convincing. I mean, seriously, does he look like a man tormented by his prophesied destiny who drinks his own piss?



① Kyle MacLachlan: the one true Paul Atreides.

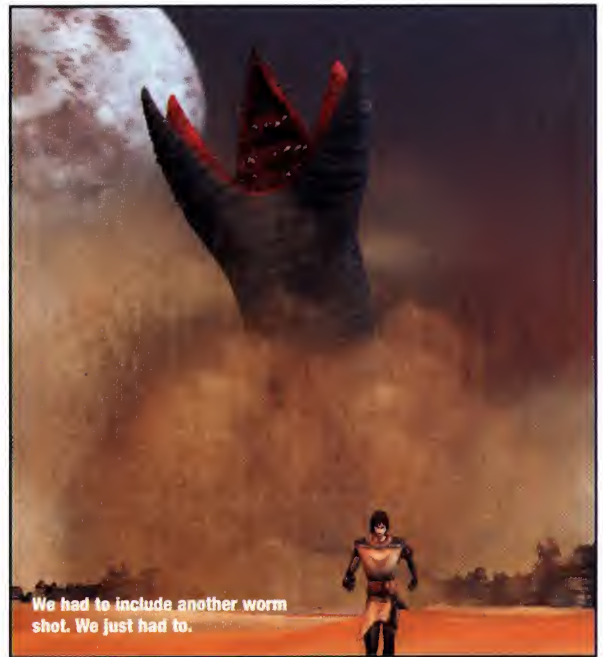


② Alec Newman: the best a man can get.



③ “Would you like to play with my Lego?”

There's quite a few attack animations. This is known as the Arse-Over-Tits Throw.



Butt-stabbing is a revered ancient technique.



SAVE ME

But the biggest complaint is the lack of a save-game option. *Frank Herbert's Dune* is also being released on the PlayStation 2, but that doesn't excuse the fact that the game only autosaves itself at the end of each mission, and so forces you to play through the same segments and watch the same cinematics over and over again. This is obviously frustrating and yet it does give the experience an addictiveness it might not otherwise have. Every

time you die after playing for 30 solid minutes you shake your keyboard in frustration, only to find yourself thinking a couple of hours later saying: "I'm just going to have one more crack at it." And this is what saves it from total failure. Like Lynch's film, it doesn't really work and yet is strangely compelling. Going round slitting throats from the back is always fun and the sandworms are an amazing sight, but this is far from the game it could have been. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

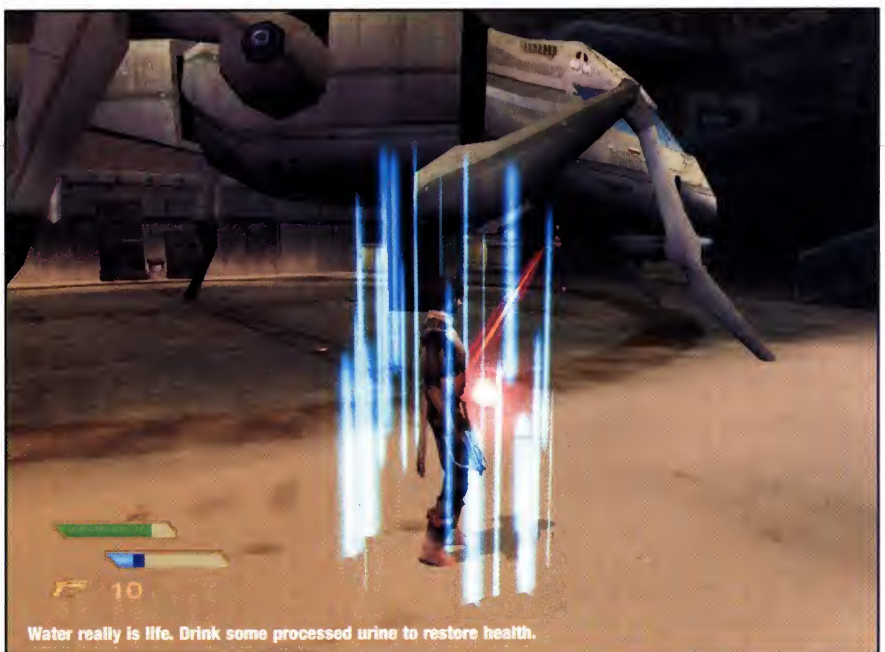
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P500
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb
3D card **WE SAY** Get more memory and a slick accelerator

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great graphics • Stealthy gameplay • No sign of Sting

DOWNERS Rubbish controls • No save system • Boring structure • Crap sound effects

60 Not quite, but nearly



IN PERSPECTIVE

Dune is a bit like *Oni* without the good fights, but at least it's better than *Planet Of The Apes*. For some real stealthy action go for *Metal Gear Solid* or *Hitman*.

Dune

Oni

Metal Gear Solid

Hitman

Planet Of The Apes



MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE

★ £29.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

Keith Pullin howls with frustration as another RTS falls short of the mark

Life isn't great for Connacht the Barbarian right now. His beloved homeland of Gower (nothing to do with greying cricketers apparently) has been overrun by hordes of vicious man-eating demons; the King has told him to hack off all of his hair and whenever there's a full moon he becomes a howling lunatic.

Yes, the plot for *Myth III: The Wolf Age* is nonsense. Not that it matters much because playing *Myth III*, and to a certain extent even enjoying it requires little understanding of the world around you, or indeed any knowledge of the two previous *Myth* outings.

SIMPLE FUN

Here is an uncomplicated game. Most levels involve a medium-

sized army of warriors, archers, wizards and grenade-throwing dwarves giving grief to skeletons, demons, zombies and other unimaginative scourges. There's no base building, no resource collecting and nothing else going on.

Although uncomplicated in its approach, this is not a game for RTS simpletons or beginners, though. *Myth III*'s strength rests in its battlefield tactics and clever use of units. Archers, for example, are most effective when perched atop a hill firing down on their wretched victims below. Powerful wizards are mere pussycats in close combat and must be well protected by guards. There are also ten different formations to master, although from our experience you could survive

perfectly well using just the line and box. Units also gain experience for every kill they make and thus the longer a particular unit survives, the stronger and more accurate it becomes. What's more, units can progress from level to level, and thus you are instantly encouraged to treat your units as more than mere cannon fodder.

Even weather conditions impact on a unit's effectiveness in battle. Flaming arrows, for example, can be extinguished by heavy rain, and torches go out if you wade through a raging torrent. Even the wind manages to play havoc with ballistics units by blowing their ordnance off target. It's also good to see intelligent enemies actually following footprints in the snow –

this is an attribute rarely seen in PC games – in fact, only *Metal Gear Solid* has managed it before.

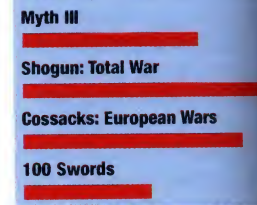
LIMITED POWER

While this third instalment of the series boasts some commendable touches, it rarely manages to fully explode into rip-roaring RTS action. *Myth III* seems to coast along without ever really breaking sweat, and even some of the climactic battles against allegedly incredibly powerful beings are usually over as soon as they've begun.

Doubtless the lack of depth limits the broader appeal of *Myth III*, but for those who are content simply to hack squelchy things into very small pieces, *Myth III* will be a welcome diversion for a while. **PCZ**

IN PERSPECTIVE

You get the impression *Myth III* would like to be *Shogun: Total War*. Unfortunately it fails in both scale and gameplay.



TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 400
Memory 96Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
250Mb HD space and Open GL-compatible video card **WE SAY** PIII 600 with 128Mb RAM, 500 Mb HD and a GeForce 3 card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great-looking landscapes and models • Brilliant interactive weather effects • Makes good use of battleground tactics
DOWNERS Simple gameplay • Never really gets going • Blood and gore everywhere (can be locked out though)

70 Bark's worse than its bite



Patrician II

Sail for Wealth · Fight for Power · Vie for Glory



Real-time trading simulation



MOTO RACER 3

★ £29.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Think once, think twice, think bike! Think *Steve Hill*

Usually for EA, a respectable amount of time has passed since the last *Moto Racer* game. Although we haven't exactly been inundated with letters inquiring as to the progress of this third instalment, French veterans Delphine have, nevertheless, been beaver away to bring you the most complete version yet. While there

packs of miniature cereals? Well, this is the motorbike game equivalent.

CROSTOWN TRAFFIC

Road bikes have always been a staple of *Moto Racer*, and they are present and correct, enabling you to pilot a slew of vehicles over some detailed tracks. It's a shamelessly arcade approach, and one that works well, making

logo has it) lets you find out, with a superbly realised Traffic mode. An idea that recently surfaced on the PS2 in the form of *Burnout*, it's the same kind of deal here, although bikes are clearly more suited to weaving through heavy traffic, particularly in light of the wilfully erratic driving shown here. It's a nerve-racking affair, with little time afforded to peruse the authentically replicated Parisian landmarks.

FOOTPRINTS

Another all-new mode is Trials, a sport that some of you may know through TV's *Kickstart*, and, of course, *Junior Kickstart*. Essentially it involves manoeuvring a bike over ludicrous man-made obstacles without putting your feet down or going arse over tit. As far as we know it's never been seen in a game



before, but it works surprisingly well, vaguely comparable to a platform game, albeit on a bike. Which just leaves motocross, which appears here in its outdoor, indoor and freestyle stunt guises. And we have to say that it's as good as any motocross-specific game out there, boasting an excellent bike and rider model.

It's testament to the game's quality that all of the sections could have been expanded into fully-fledged games, as each mode feels complete. However, with only three tracks per discipline, there have to be question marks over the longevity, with little to aim for once everything has been unlocked. But if you're considering buying a bike game, then this has to be an option, offering something for everyone.

Like the *Radio Times*, you never knew there was so much in it. **PC**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 450
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb video card **WE SAY** Hogwash.
You'll need a PIII 900, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb video card

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Variety of bike modes • Each section is worthy of inclusion • Admirably arcade approach
- DOWNERS Limited longevity • Some graphical glitches • Needs a high-end PC

74 No jacket required

“The play this time around has been to squeeze in as much diversity as possible”

hasn't been a huge departure from the template of fast-moving two-wheeled vehicles, the play this time around has been to squeeze in as much diversity as possible. You know those variety

for some close races without the need for split-second braking.

Any fool can ride round a purpose-built track, but how would you fare in a busy city centre? More to the point, how would you cope in Paris, a city not renowned for its road safety record? *MR3* (or Mister 3, as the

IN PERSPECTIVE

OK, so there are now enough motocross games for them to warrant their own genre, but this one is definitely the best of the three. However, not even this third instalment can quite compete against *Motocross Madness 2*'s sheer arcade-like playability.

Moto Racer 3

Motocross Madness 2

Motocross Mania

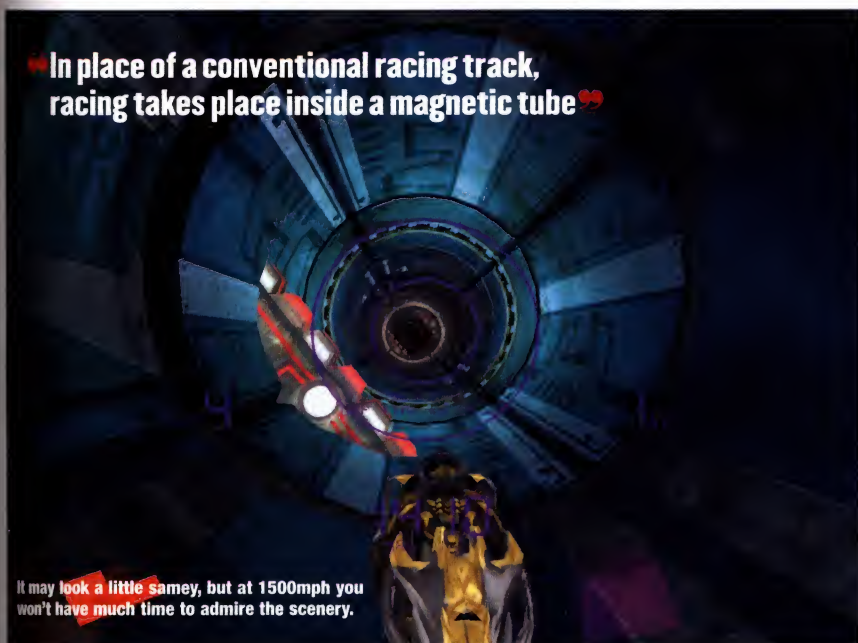
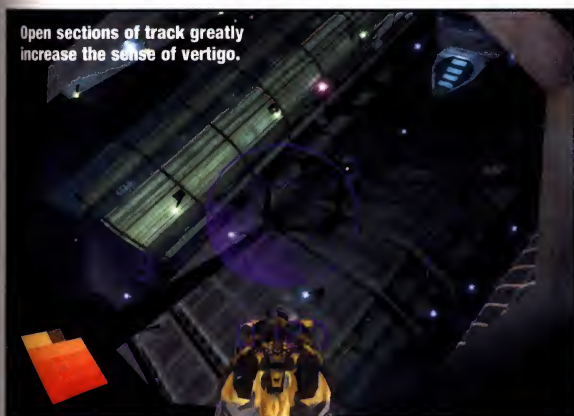
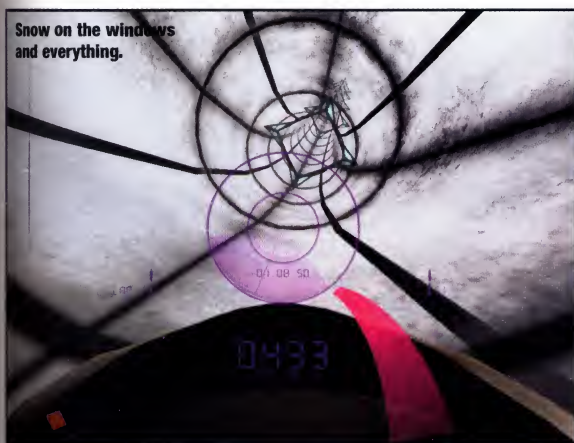
Moto Racer 2



BALLISTICS

★ £34.99 • Xicat Interactive • Out now

An arcade racer so fast Anthony Holden's eyes nearly fell out



Every year at about this time, a new set of hovercars/maglev bikes/inverter buggies are deployed on the futuristic neon-lit starting grid, each one outdoing the other with ridiculous hyperbole recycled from last year's marketing shambles. Key slogans include 'unrivalled sense of speed', 'ultimate arcade racer' and the ever popular 'adrenaline-pumping action'. Clearly we're dealing with that particular sub-genre, the futuristic arcade racing game, which was both popularised and defined by the banging techno beats of *WipeOut* all those years ago. Often such games can be quite a bit of fun, yet somehow the bold rhetoric is never quite realised.

HOLD EVERYTHING

Ballistics sits quite comfortably within the future race genre and attempts little that hasn't been seen before. The difference is it actually lives up to the claims. Indeed, in terms of the criteria for

success in the genre it is nothing short of perfect.

For starters, *Ballistics* is, in fact, the fastest racing game ever. There's no speed limit attached to its magnetically driven hoverbikes, the ceiling being determined rather by your own reflexes. In place of a conventional track, racing takes place inside a magnetic tube, the only impediments to acceleration taking the form of red barriers – walls, bumps and crossbeams – clearly best avoided. Hitting blue coolant pads, on the other hand, is a good thing; running over yellow booster chargers positively essential. It's a logical extension of the up-wall action of such games as *Killer Loop* and *Rollcage Stage II*, and makes for far greater emphasis on pure speed.

SIT AND SPIN

Indeed, *Ballistics* eschews many of the hallmarks of the genre, such as weaponry, shortcuts, and track memorisation, leaving you to worry about only two variables – speed and heat. Heat builds up mainly as a result of collisions, while a manual cooling system causes friction and slows you down, hence doubling as a brake. The only other thing you have to worry about is losing your magnetic connection with the track. Sometimes you'll want to do this, as it allows you to spin through mid-air and pick up bonus items. Mostly though, it will occur as a result of your own ineptitude, through failing to stick to the outside wall on tight curves and colliding with barriers.

Of course, all this speed would mean nothing if the visuals weren't up to the job, and thankfully they are superb. The spatial stretching effect that kicks in when you gun the booster is particularly nice, as is the slight blurring of the geometry when you hit mach speeds. The designers have done wonders with the seven courses as well, using transparent surfaces and open frameworks to alleviate the potential monotony of racing through a drainpipe.

The only possible criticism to be made is that, by refining the

IN PERSPECTIVE

There are already several superb titles in the future race genre. The seminal *WipeOut* games have long been surpassed, especially by the innovative *Rollcage Stage II*. *Killer Loop* had its good points but none can match *Ballistics* in terms of purity and speed.

Ballistics

Killer Loop

Rollcage Stage II

WipeOut XL

genre to such a pure focus on speed and reflex, the game is also that much more shallow. And this is not helped by the inclusion of a frankly worn-out upgrade structure, where, predictably, you must use cash earned from races to buy new components for your bike.

However, the first time you go supersonic inside a narrowly twisting cylinder and defy all expectations of your own reflexive aptitude with your spinning genius, none of this will matter. To the glee of marketing copywriters everywhere, the speed-happy action of *Ballistics* really will leave your adrenal gland as dry as a stiffened sponge. Or some such nonsense. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 400
Memory 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D graphics card **WE SAY** PIII 600
or better and a GeForce 3

PCZ VERDICT

- ↑ **UPPERS** Truly unparalleled sense of speed • Simple control system • Pure racing dynamic
- ↓ **DOWNERS** Somewhat shallow • Only seven tracks • Slightly unstable code

82 A new benchmark for the future racing sub-genre

ZOO TYCOON

★ £29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Mark Hill finds zoos morally questionable. And he finds this game just plain boring

On a scale of questionable ethics, a game about running a zoo doesn't quite compare with say, *Concentration Camp Tycoon*. But building an empire around a bunch of animals shoved in cages for visitors munching candyfloss to stare at still seems distasteful. Not that

the public at large will think so. Zoos are still portrayed as the place the whole family can go for a fun day out and a perfectly suitable subject for children's books. Putting moral considerations aside though, *Zoo Tycoon* is still open to criticism. For one thing, we haven't seen such a boring management game since *Sim Ant*.

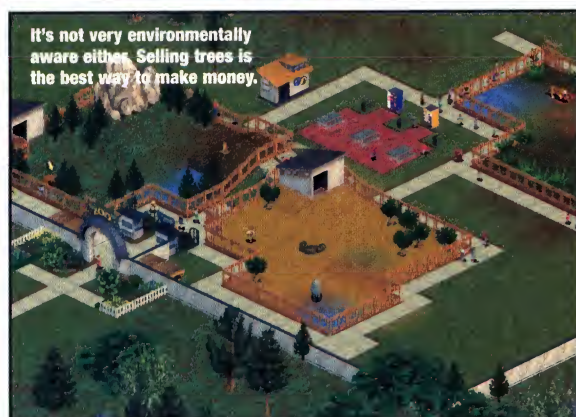
ANIMAL HOUSE

The game is divided into two modes: scenarios and freeform, the first one setting out very clear objectives to be completed within a specified time, the second closer to the original *Theme Park*, giving you carte blanche to build until you simply can't take it anymore. In both cases you have to build paths, fence in areas and hire keepers and repairmen. You start off with a small number of animals you can 'adopt' and stick in the exhibits, but you can research new species (not quite sure how that works) as well as new habitats, shelters and toys, while also improving staff training.

There isn't much micromanaging to endure but, as if to make up for this, *Zoo Tycoon* has a very stupid system for ensuring the well-being and happiness of each of the animals. As well as company, toys and food, your animals need their original environment recreated with just the right percentage of ground covered with the correct surface. You can spend ages adding a bit more savannah grass, and tweaking the amount of dirt on the floor before the critters are fully satisfied. And it doesn't exactly make for good gameplay.

The hard work stops as soon as you've finished your objectives, and all there is left to do is twiddle your thumbs until you rub your fingerprints off.

The greatest thing about *Zoo Tycoon* is that you can remove the walls of the exhibits and let the animals run loose, eating guests and causing mayhem until recaptured. You can also achieve the one thing zoos are good at: preserving endangered species and helping them to procreate. But in a very similar situation to real zoos, the newly borns are simply visitor-



IN PERSPECTIVE

This has more to do with the long lineage of *Sim* games such as *SimEarth*, *SimFarm* and the rest, with just a little *Theme Park* thrown in. With the *Theme Park* series down the pan and *The Sims* monopolising Maxis' time, you might want to try something a bit different like *Monopoly Tycoon*.

Zoo Tycoon

Theme Park World

Monopoly Tycoon

Running a real zoo

fodder and there's no chance of returning them to the wild.

Considering the barely functional graphics, irritating music and repetitive gameplay, parents who buy this for their children could well be accused of cruelty to children. [C]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** At least 64Mb RAM unless you enjoy slowdown

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Easy-to-use interface • Good tutorials
- DOWNERS Irritating environment system • Shoddy graphics • Gets boring very quickly

48 Cruelty zoo

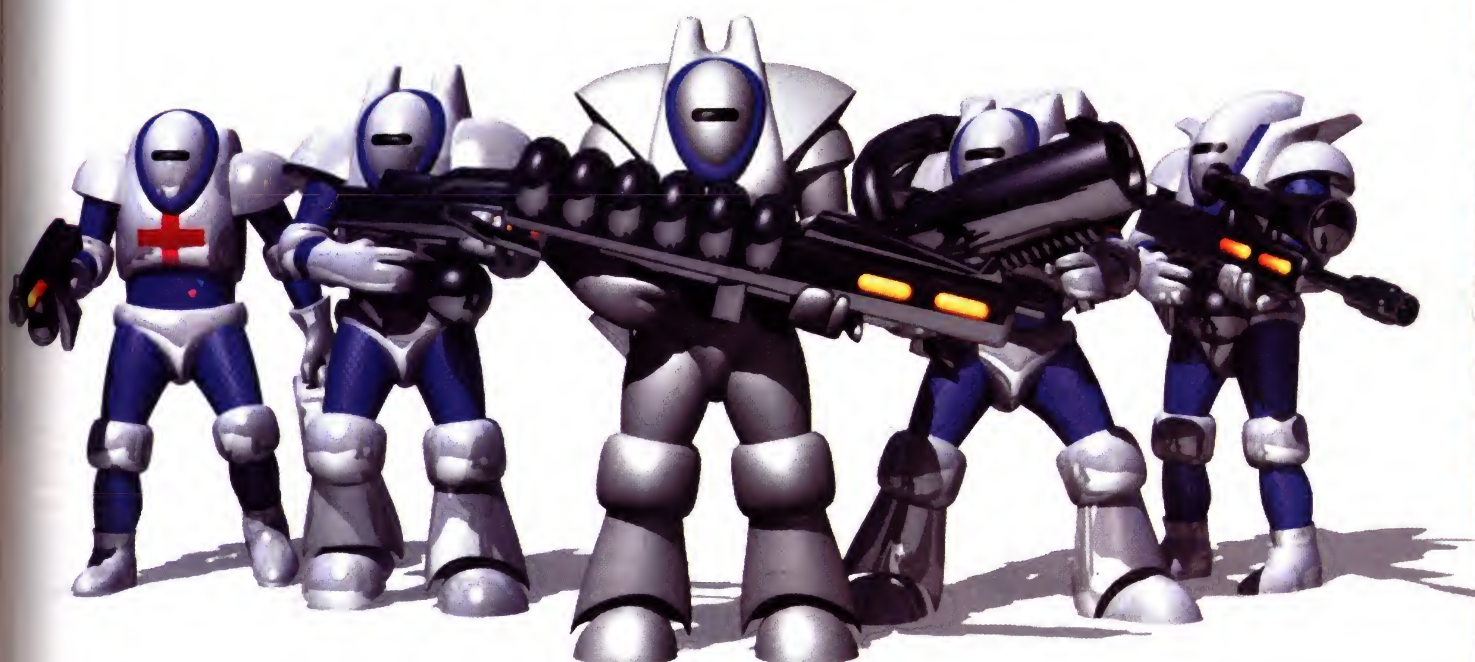
ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES www.pczone.co.uk #11 JAN 2002

MASSIVE PREVIEW

LASER SQUAD NEMESIS

The return of a classic, from the creators of X-Com



FULL PLAYTEST

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

The game that's taken the US by storm

PLUS REVIEWS OF:

PLAYASMANAGER 2
HALF-LIFE RALLY
ROBOFORGE
STRONGHOLD
HPB BOT
FULL METAL JACKET
THREEWAVE CTF

REVIEWED

ASHERON'S CALL: DARK MAJESTY

Microsoft lays claim to the online throne



EMAIL DOMINATION



A new *EverQuest* expansion pack on the way, *Asheron's Call* makes a triumphant return, *Dark Age Of Camelot* storms the US charts – if you happen to be one of the many thousands of fantasy online RPG fiends, there is no better time to be alive. If you're not into goblins, however, there's still plenty to be getting excited about. Leaving aside *Star Wars Galaxies* for a moment, I'm rather looking forward to Codo Games' *Laser Squad Nemesis*. It helps of course that the original *Laser Squad* is one of my all-time favourite games, and that it's the same developers behind the both of them. With every online game requiring high-speed Internet access, it's refreshing to hear of a game that runs on the same principals as a simple email, where you only have to be connected to the Net to send and receive game turns, leaving you to plan your next move in your own – free – time. If that sort of thing appeals, get reading our massive preview on page 88, plus our reviews of *RoboForge* and *PlayAsManager 2* – two new games that make greater demands on your mind than they do on your trusty old modem.

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

CONTENTS

86 DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

We play the US version of Mythic's epic online RPG

88 LASER SQUAD NEMESIS

Happy days are here again

92 ASHERON'S CALL: DARK MAJESTY

Microsoft is catching up with the pack

94 PLAYASMANAGER 2

Anco's online soccer sim gets an update

95 STRONGHOLD

It's fort with danger

95 ROBOFORGE

Design a droid and send it into battle

96 THREEWAVE CTF

Capture The Flag shenanigans

96 HPB BOT

It's a *Half-Life* bot and it's quite good actually

97 HALF-LIFE RALLY

Driving in *Half-Life*? This can't be happening

97 FULL METAL JACKET

This is for fighting, but is it for fun?

HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main PC ZONE reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT



Ultima's revenge

Lord British may have fled, but there's life yet in *UO*

Ultima Online may have taken something of a beating in the last couple of years, and will probably never regain dominant status in the MMORPG arena, but with a loyal user base still in excess of 200,000, the world of Britannia will continue to expand and perhaps even thrive. To this end, veteran developer Origin Systems, eager to rally after the *Ultima Online 2* fiasco, has announced the latest extension of the original online role-player, in the form of *Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge*.

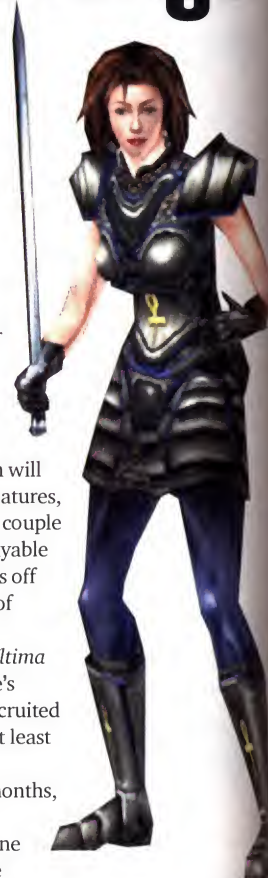
As you'd reasonably expect, the expansion will offer all the usual bits and pieces: 30 new creatures, two new (non-player) races, 30 new items, a couple of minor gameplay enhancements, a new playable area and a major new story thread. It all kicks off in a previously unknown section of the land of Ilshenar, where that no-good bastard Lord Blackthorn, a figure long-familiar from the *Ultima* games, has made his stronghold. Basically he's figuring on conquering Britannia, and has recruited an army of the damned to help him out. Or at least an army of the extremely unlucky.

The new events will unfold over several months, accompanied by supporting fiction online. Apparently it will be up to players to determine the outcome of the attack, as the evil scourge will only be repelled with a concerted effort from virtuous players.

In a modest coup for the franchise, the 30 original monsters and creatures in the expansion have all been designed by cartoonist Todd McFarlane, best known as creator of the *Spawn* comics. His influence has lent the new hordes a dark edge, though some of the slightly incongruous cyberpunk man/machine designs might not go down so well with fantasy traditionalists. More significantly, the new creatures feature all-new AI routines, promising far greater emphasis on strategic combat tactics.

New music will, of course, be apparent, as well as the welcome addition of mp3 support. The expansion also heralds the introduction of a full Virtue system, challenging players to perform certain acts in order to gain (or lose) virtues, an addition which will hopefully breathe some new life into the character customisation system for old-time *UO* hacks.

All in all, *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* seems like a fairly ample package, and you have to wait until early 2002 until it sees light. Meanwhile, keep an eye on www.uolbr.com for more info.





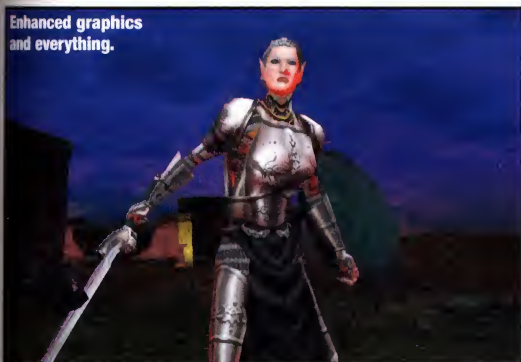
That would be your Vah Shir then.

No sleep till Luclin

EverQuest flies you to the moon and back



He's not happy about the new horse feature.



Enhanced graphics and everything.

HUGE EVERQUEST SPECIAL

If you've yet to sample the fantasy-themed delights of *EverQuest* but have perhaps toyed with the idea, maybe fancy that you'd be a bit handy with an archaic instrument of death or the odd bit of conjuration, then you need look no further than next month's *PC ZONE*, where you'll find the full version of the game on our coverdiscs, complete with a free two week trial account courtesy of Sony Online Entertainment. Plus, inside the hallowed pages of *ZONE*, our resident 'Quest-aholic' Chris 'Nature Boy' Anderson will be inducting you into the fold with a massive getting-started guide, no doubt packed with loads of obscure specialist tips that only a worryingly obsessed man like he could unearth. Out January 10.

If the phrase 'powerful magic has breached the portal to Norrath's distant moon' gets you excited, then you're either a dirty-minded pervert or one of the world's 400,000-odd *EverQuest* fans. If it's the latter, you're no doubt already aware that the third expansion to the *EverQuest* universe has arrived in the form of *Shadows Of Luclin* (or at least should have arrived by the time you read this if the promise of a simultaneous global release on December 3 is anything to go by – the protracted nature of the printing process means we're actually writing this in 1986).

For non-converts to the world's best-loved MMORPG, here's the deal: Norrath's only inhabited moon, Luclin, is now open for business, and looks bloody nice too thanks to a some major enhancements to *EverQuest*'s 3D engine. Luclin offers several dozen new zones for exploration, all charmingly lit by the azure orb of fair Norrath waxing in the sky above. New items, new spells, new creatures and a new playable race, the cat-like Vah Shir, have also been added, but the most significant enhancement seems to be the long-overdue ability to purchase and ride horses. While buying a horse will be hugely expensive and only feasible for higher level players, the benefits in terms of speed alone will be considerable. You'll also be able to fight and cast spells on horseback, as well as generally look quite posh. Check out www.everquest.com for details.

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb dishes up the latest news in modding

Christmas may be just around the corner, but there's no holiday for the tireless mod developers of the world – glued to their keyboards as ever, busy creating some of the finest entertainment money can't buy. As usual, FPSs are leading the way, with dozens of mods getting a wintertime spit and polish.

UT mod *Unreal Forever* is now up to version 6.02 and offers yet more great and bizarre weapons, as well as its own single-player 'mod of a mod', *Beer From Outer Space* (some of which is in German, unfortunately), not to mention more fun than one mod should be allowed to deliver. There's also a *U4E-Fortress*-style mod in development which promises to be a good laugh. Check out www.planetunreal.com/u4e to find out the full gen.

Also for UT, team-based mod *Weapons Factory* is at version 106a and still going strong. It also has its own online tournament underway, and can be found at www.planetunreal.com/weaponsfactory. There's also a new WWII mod in the works for UT and visitors to www.planetunreal.com/thirdreich will be able to find out some initial details about it. Expect to see some lovely-looking period weapons, skins and more.

Not that other FPS fanatics will be left out of course. *Half-Life* aficionados should visit www.alask.net/~articafe/MS/download for the latest v1.01 version of the *Master Sword* add-on. Check out www.planethalf-life.com/vampire to see the new weapon that Father D keeps up his sleeve in this great vampire vs slayers teamplay mod, or keep an eye on <http://ahl.action-web.net> for the arrival of beta 4.1 of the superb *Action Half-Life* mod (a raft of maps for this top class mod can be found at <http://ahlmnd.telefragged.com> too). Likewise, *Quake* lovers will find much to be pleased about with new skins and update info for *Quake III Fortress* at www.q3f.com, as well as the *Dark Conjunction* single-player mod approaching a beta release at www.planetquake.com/tdc. There's some new maps at *Quake3World* (www.quake3world.com/maps), but the big news is that *Reaction Quake III*, the reworking of the brilliant and seminal *Action Quake II*, is having its first beta release (more details at www.telefragged.com/reaction). We'll be sure to give this one a full workout in the near future. Also, there's some great online-only action courtesy of three-way team mod *TribalCTF* at www.planetquake.com/tribalctf.

It's good news for devotees of *Deus Ex* as well, with a new mod based on the *Dune* world to be found at www.planetdeus.com/dune and a new section for third-party single-player missions at www.planetdeusex.com/dx1/files/singleplayer. Sadly, though, the *Deus Ex Fortress* project is no more.

As if to stir the waters still more, into this already churning melee comes the release of Monolith's awesome *Aliens Vs Predator 2*, and anyone who read Martin Korda's trembling review in issue 110 can see that this game could have a major impact on the modding scene. True, the game has been unveiled without bot support (as indeed was *Half-Life*) but the coding tools have been promised and with gameplay up to the standard of *Half-Life* as well as loads of sphincter-clenching atmosphere, *AvP2* modding looks pant-wettingly promising. Both www.planetavp.com and Lv-426 Modifications (www.planetavp.com/lvmods) are on the ball and sure to spot any new developments.

This doesn't mean it's only FPS gamers who can celebrate the festive season, as the release of *Red Alert 2: Yuri's Revenge* has re-inspired the RTS community, and new maps, missions and mods are appearing daily at sites like www.cncgames.com/maps and www.planetcnc.com/ra2mod. It's looking good.

Step back in time and prepare to enter the DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

EverQuest veteran
Dan Emery thinks
it may soon be
time to move on

**BETA
TEST**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Mythic
PUBLISHER Vivendi (US)/Wanadoo (UK)
WEBSITE www.darkageofcamelot.com
OUT January 2001 (TBC)

“For once, rather than having some horrific fantasy names, the developers have actually opened an atlas and a history book”

Despite the best efforts of Sony, FIFA and other big names in the industry to transform the PC games market into something hip and trendy, a glance at this week's US charts knocks that idea for six. *Dark Age Of Camelot* from Vivendi Universal Publishing has been on the top of the charts for two weeks and looks set to remain there for a while. *Max Payne*, *Flight Simulator 2002* and *Operation Flashpoint*, all one-time blockbusters, are put into the shade

line RPGs. Every game has its rare items (or ph4t l33t, as they say) and strutting about in your high level (hard as hell to find – so don't even ask) suit of armour, listening to the 'ohhhhs' and 'ahhhs' from low-level players (or n00bs), gives some people a kick. Sad people, who really should get out more, but who have a habit of congregating in online RPGs. However, we digress...

MOCK MYTHOLOGY

Based around British, Norwegian and Celtic folklore, *Dark Age Of Camelot (DAoC)* is set in the Kingdom of Albion, immediately following the death of King Arthur. You enter a chaotic land, in which peace has been shattered and dark forces threaten the Kingdom. You choose to be

members of one of the three Realms striving for supremacy: The Britons, the Celts, or the Norse. The Britons hail from the former kingdom of Albion, once ruled by King Arthur. The Celts are from the wild and magical western island of Hibernia. The Norse are large barbarians from the lands to the north. So for once, rather than having some horrific fantasy names, the developers have actually opened an atlas and a history book. For example, if you play as the Britons, you will find names such as Cornwall, Salisbury Plain and Hadrian's Wall. The land is mapped on the British Isles although they have also included the mythical land of Lyonesse, which, according to legend, connected Cornwall to the Scilly Isles. The Realm of Hibernia



by this RPG giant. But why the sudden rush? After all, aren't RPGs two a penny? Well, not quite. The battle for the online crown, despite valiant efforts by *Asheron's Call* and *Anarchy Online*, has sat firmly on the head of Verant with *EverQuest*. And while it does have the new *EverQuest: Shadows of Luclin* shipping in the next month or so, *Dark Age Of Camelot* is just a wee bit different.

Initially it feels like your standard RPG fare. Create a character, choose your race/class/sex, assign attributes such as skill, dexterity and charisma, and roam around the land looking for creatures (Mobs) to kill and quests to fulfil. Gain experience, become an Uber Pimp and turn the game into a fashion show. While that may seem a bit cynical, that is the basic gist of almost all on-

TALK THE TALK

PC Zone's 'cut out and keep' guide to on-line RPG geek speak

Ph4t l33t: Phat Lewt – a valuable item
Bish: Bitch, as in 'come here and cook me dinner'

FNG: F****g New Guy

n00b: See FNG

Twink: Low-level character with high-level gear

sux00r: Not very good. From the American 'sucks'

j00z: You

RTFM: Read the f****g manual
AFK: Away From Keyboard (and having a life)

Taxi: Player with the ability to port players around the land

Your daddy: See 'Bish'

<finger>: Self-explanatory

Lag: When the servers and/or your Internet connection slow down and screw the game

Mob: A monster in the game

NPC: Non Player Character. All not human-controlled players

Spawn points: Same as FPS. Position on map or arena where mobs re-pop

PK: Player Killer (only found on PvP games)

Exp: Experience, usually in the form of points. Get enough points and you go up a level

Debuff: Casting spells on a mob that remove any magical bonus it may have had

There are literally hundreds more but, quite frankly, we couldn't be arsed. If you really want to e-mail any corrections or additions feel free to do so to: letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk, marking the e-mail subject line 'I need to get out more'.



(Ireland) and The Realm of Midgard (Scandinavia) are mapped in a similar fashion.

But having some mock trappings of mythology doesn't a good game make. Thankfully, the developers have gone a bit further than just re-creating *EverQuest* (although the similarities are too many to ignore – we'll get on to that later). The whole game exemplifies the latest work in online RPGs with fully 3D rendered characters and mobs. What's more, you can customise your armour and weapons with various dyes to create a personal look. Well, we did warn you about the fashion victims. The sounds, too, are head and shoulders above the competition, with rain actually sounding like a downpour of water as opposed to the usual tropical storm in an oil drum.

But what separates *DAoC* from the others (apart from some cutting-edge graphics), is its attempt to balance a Player vs Player (PvP) environment with a pure

co-op arena. While there are three different realms, all with enough mobs and quests to keep you locked in for ages if you so wish, each of the three is also at war with the others. Now, the main problem with PvP is either 'spawn camping', where mid-level players wait for newcomers to log on and promptly dispatch them (these players are usually aged 12, American and are a total pain in the arse), or 'gang banging', where a team of players will rip through a town causing chaos. On the flip side, good PvP is loads of fun. So what developer Mythic has done is create frontier areas where mid- to high-level players (usually groups) can attack an enemy's realm. However, to stop one big group rushing about they have put in forts and keeps which need to be captured before you can

advance inland. And naturally, the further in you go, the tougher it becomes. The very far reaches are accessible by all sides, and it is not a nice place to walk about alone. And even if PvP isn't your thing, there are still plenty of hostile mobs, quests and unpleasant dungeons where you can co-op fight without risk of a PvP encounter.

SPOT THE INFLUENCE

Another good feature of *DAoC* is the anti-twinking. The art of twinkling is when a high level or rich character player buys loads of the best kit for a new character, giving him a serious advantage over his peers. While in co-operative play the only effect on other players is a dented ego, in PvP it is seriously suss, and is regarded by many as cheating. We won't bore you with

the workings, suffice to say that if you give a low-level character high-level kit, he will break it very swiftly. OK, the system isn't foolproof but it's the best we've seen yet.

However, it is also very apparent that the developers were one-time *EverQuest* fans. The interface is remarkably similar and many of the commands are the same. What's more, they have assigned factions to mobs in an identical fashion to *EverQuest*. Factions are basically a grouping for different types of Mobs. So any kind of Zombie or Skeleton would be assigned to the Undead faction. The more of the undead you piss off, the more hostile future encounters will be. And visa versa.

DAoC looks full of promise and if the sales in the US are anything to go by, it will storm the UK charts too. However, in Europe it's coming out after the *EverQuest* expansion so the competition will be fierce. But it looks good, sounds good and, from what we've heard, plays good. Lets hope next month's review is good. **PV**

Doesn't look like they're moving anywhere too quickly.

Back once again the Rebelstar Raiders

LASER SQUAD

NEMESIS

The *X-COM* series may be dead, but its creators are alive and kicking. **Richie Shoemaker** goes back to the future

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Codo Games
PUBLISHER Codo Games
WEBSITE www.lasersquadnemesis.com
OUT Jan 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ *Laser Squad* is an all-time classic, the precursor to the bestselling *X-COM* series, and *Nemesis* is from the same people
- ★ Simple, 56K modem-friendly, tactical gameplay, played via email
- ★ Future plans include bigger maps and even a single-player game
- ★ It's about the closest to a new *X-COM* game that we're going to get

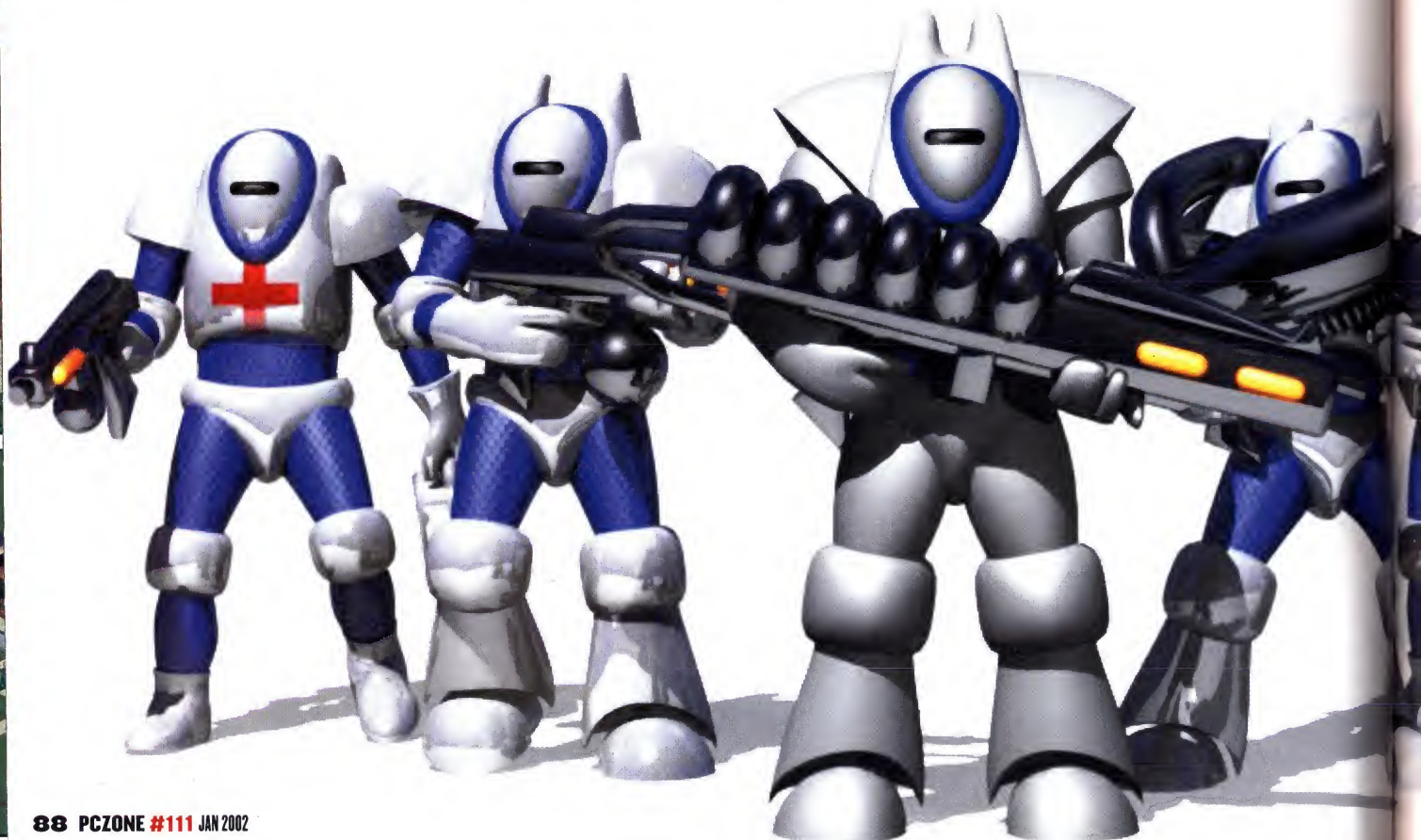
A short history lesson for you: way back in 1988 Target Games released *Laser Squad* for the ageing Spectrum. A sequel of sorts to 1984's *Rebelstar Raiders*, it was the game that would eventually form the inspiration for the world-famous *X-COM* series. All three games, plus a good many others (including two *X-COM* sequels) were created by Julian Gollop, who, along with brother Nick and a few others, embarked more recently

on the impressive *Dreamland Chronicles*, a game I had the fortune to see before its US publisher Bethesda pulled the financial plug. Lesser mortals would have perhaps turned their back on games for good after such a blow, but within weeks *Laser Squad Nemesis* was announced and Gollop and Co were back making games under their new name, Codo.

Now before we go any further let's just say that *Laser Squad Nemesis*, despite its heritage, is unlikely to change the world in the

same way that *X-COM* once did (or perhaps how *Dreamland* might have – we'll never know). Unlike previous outing Mythos, Codo as an outfit is a good deal smaller, and by being fully independent from capricious publishers, head boy Julian Gollop has gone back to his 8-bit roots, not only by remixing and updating one of his first games, but by taking control of his own destiny.

"It's very refreshing. We no longer have to pander to the whims of publishers and marketing people," says Julian from his



Bacofol-lined Geoscape command console. "Now we can deal directly with our consumers because we are selling *LSN* as an online subscription service. This means that the game can evolve rapidly as more people play it. It is kind of similar to what we used to do ten years ago when myself and Nick would produce expansion kits for *Laser Squad*, which we sold by mail order, and our small office was piled high with tapes and packages. Fortunately, the Internet makes distribution a good deal easier."

YOU'VE GOT MAIL

Despite creating the *X-COM* line and developing the first three games in the sequence, the Gollops have had little or no input into any of the subsequent games in the series, which has certainly seen a few odd and misplaced games within it (the two most promising, *X-COM Alliance* and *X-COM Genesis*, both ended up on the scrapheap). Curiously, it is one of the best non-Gollop efforts that *Nemesis* bears closest resemblance to: *Em@il X-COM*.

"*Em@il X-COM* was a nice little game," admits Gollop, far from grudgingly. "But *LSN* is much more sophisticated, with hidden maps and simultaneous movement. Perhaps the greatest shame with *Em@il X-COM* was that Hasbro did nothing more with it. The advantage of an Internet-based game, even an email game, is that

more features can be added over time, and a sense of community can develop."

Community is certainly something Gollop and his Codo cohorts are keen to build up, for while *Nemesis* won't be offering the same kind of persistent world *EverQuesters* enjoy for 15 bucks a month, for the same price you will get six months of tactical gameplay, in which each battle won gradually gets you higher and higher up the *Nemesis* league table. Not only that, but as a minimal download, you'll be able to play on any machine and

not have to worry about lag. So low are the technical requirements compared to today's online games that you could probably get by with an abacus and a couple of carrier pigeons. You see, like *Em@il X-COM*, *Nemesis* is essentially a play-by-email game, where players plan their movement and combat orders before sending them off to a central server. When both players receive

the results file they can view the action of their units and plan the next lot, utilising any number of tactical moves.

"They can also rewind the game to the first turn and view the whole battle from the beginning," reveals Julian. "Effectively the game is executed simultaneously with regular planning intervals. It works very well, and is very tense. It

CV

codo

CODO GAMES

Laser Squad Nemesis may be Codo's first game, but there's plenty of history behind the team.

1984 *Rebelstar Raiders* hits the Spectrum, followed in 1986 by budget sequel *Rebelstar*. This was also the year of *Chaos*, a turn-based combat game where wizards battled by summoning hordes of creatures. Its sequel arrived in 1990.

1988 *Rebelstar 2* and *Laser Squad* arrive for the 8-bit machines

1991 A planned *Laser Squad* sequel is dismissed, only to resurface in 1994 under another name...

1994 *UFO: Enemy Unknown* is the first *X-COM* to appear, after a problematic development period that nearly saw the game canned. Six months later the sequel *Terror From The Deep* appears. Mythos, however, doesn't have much input, having already started work on the third game.

1997 *X-COM Apocalypse* marks the end of Mythos's involvement in the *X-COM* series. Microprose buys the rights and buries the series.

1998 The final game to be released by Mythos was *Magic & Mayhem*, essentially a sequel to the cult classic *Chaos*. It too was left to another developer and appeared as *The Art Of Magic* only last month.

2000 Mythos shows off *Dreamland Chronicles*, a full 3D tactical combat game along much the same lines as the *X-COM* series.

2001 *Dreamland Chronicles* is canned due to lack to finance, and Mythos closes, Codo emerges from the chaos and *Laser Squad Nemesis* is conceived and created in a matter of months.

2002 Expect more *Laser Squad Nemesis* and even some *Chaos*

Free to download, US\$15 for six months' play is pretty good value.



An entire co-operative online campaign is planned.



With a map editor in the works, players can recreate their favourite *X-COM* levels.





X-COM, GOING, GONE



We ask Julian Gollop: where did it all go wrong for X-COM?

PCZ Your crowning glory as a developer must be the *X-COM* series. How does it feel to see other developers working on the series, and how do you feel the series has evolved?

JG I don't think the *X-COM* series has developed in the right direction, and that's a great shame. Although I enjoy first-person shooters and space sims, this isn't what *X-COM* players wanted, and it certainly isn't what I wanted. Unfortunately, we were forced to sell the licence to Microprose when we were near the end of developing *Apocalypse*, and I think things may have been different had we still been developing the series today.

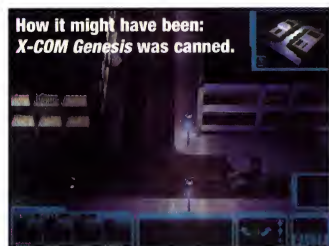


PCZ With *X-COM Alliance* and *X-COM Genesis* seemingly dead, and the latest *X-COM* game *Enforcer* as far from the series' roots as you can get, how do you see the future for *X-COM*?

JG The mind boggles, doesn't it? Perhaps 'X-COM Monopoly' might have been next if Hasbro still owned the brand. I hope that Infogrames will be more sensible and take the game back to its roots by creating a true strategy game. Unfortunately, the strategy games market has been so totally dominated by RTS games it wouldn't surprise me if some bright spark in marketing decided that some 3D RTS clone would do the trick. I hope that *X-COM* fans can bring some pressure to bear on Infogrames and resurrect a project similar to *X-COM Genesis*.

PCZ Nice hat. Where'd you get it?

JG Same place as you got those tights.



combines the suspense and precision of *UFO: Enemy Unknown*'s turn-based play with the frantic fire fights and chaos of *X-COM Apocalypse*'s real-time system."

USE THE FORCE POINTS, LUKE

How a game might work is that one player chooses a scenario, one of the three races, and then looks for an opponent, either by selecting one from the current league table, or by emailing someone (and you can literally challenge anyone, even Bill Gates if you have his email address). Once the gauntlet has been picked up, both players, having selected their troops by spending Force points, they are then deployed on the map. Because the aims are simple, it then remains for you to explore the map (they are selected at random) and find and kill your enemy. A win gets you a point, losers are deducted a point and the higher the division you're in, the more maps, units or races you will eventually have access to.

"Periodically the highest-scoring players in a division are promoted to a higher rank," says Julian. "Players do not have to bear the humiliation of relegation, however. For a league game, players can only play against other players of the same rank, which helps to ensure that players of similar ability are playing each other, and also allows players of higher rank to use additional game features which are downloaded with every promotion."

The three initial races on offer – Marines, Spawn and Mechanoid – differ wildly. Predictably, the Space Marines have the usual round of Grunts, Medics, Snipers, Grenadiers and a Commander – you can probably guess what each does. On the Mechanoid and Spawn side are a less traditional mix, ranging from '50s B-movie droids to the *Alien*-inspired Spawn units which can lay eggs after eating human corpses. If you're ancient enough to have played the old *Rebelstar* games you'll have some idea of what to expect.

RETURN OF THE GOOEY BLOB

Beta testing is currently underway, and initially *Nemesis* will offer a limited set of game types. Units will only be able to interact with each other (rather than with the scenery) in any meaningful way. Considering how quickly the game has come on in just a few months, however, it is clear that waiting for new features, unit types and maps will be a matter of days or weeks rather than months. At the rate Codo is progressing, subscribers can expect to be able to



Only single-level maps at the moment, though expect multi-tiered maps in the future.

Zoom out to see the whole battle played through from beginning to end.

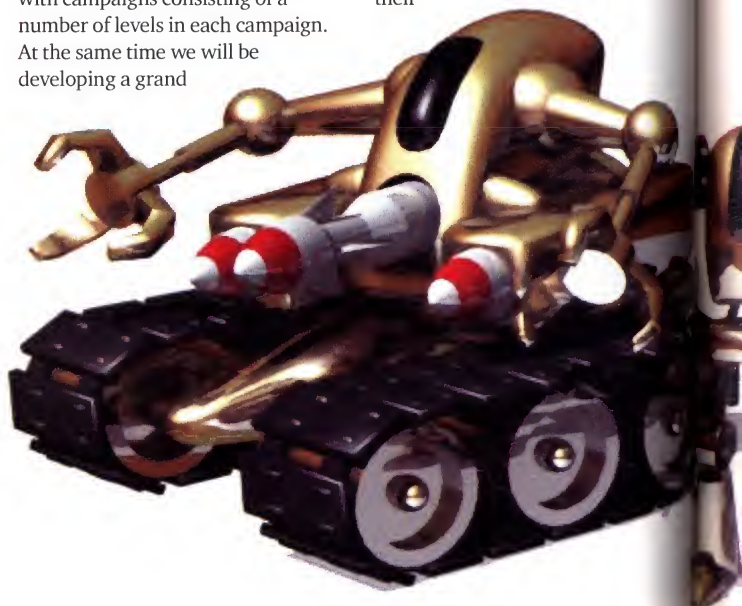


equip their units (all are preset at the moment), find objects across the maps, lay traps, and even create their own scenarios and maps. And development doesn't stop there...

"The first thing we'll add will be new terrain sets and scenario types," says Julian. "Then we will be implementing a single-player game with campaigns consisting of a number of levels in each campaign. At the same time we will be developing a grand

strategic game which will allow players to compete in a bigger universe as a squad commander in a vast intergalactic war."

Having seen *Dreamland Chronicles* binned, along with the technology that went into it, it's understandable that Codo is keen to make use of the innovations in their





Grenades or missiles can take out walls, behind which your enemy may be taking refuge.



Line of sight is very important, as in the X-COM games.



Corporal Jonian will return, as will the ability to equip your troops.



Dreamland could have been the next X-COM, sadly it wasn't to be.



Laser Squad didn't arrive on PC until 1992, while work on X-COM was already underway.

current game, and having updated Laser Squad, it appears another Gollop classic might be meeting its own Nemesis.

"Yes, definitely. There will be an email version of Chaos," reveals Julian. "Taking elements from Lords Of Chaos, it is likely that the game will have a strong role-playing element with different character types and

spell levels, as well as numerous environment types."

So there you have it: with Laser Squad Nemesis and its ongoing development, and a similar remix for Chaos, not only are the Gollops back, they're back with a vengeance. With its familiar gameplay adapted for a ravenous online audience of die-hard X-COM fans, the newly-independent Codo games is in a position to do what it wants creatively. As more and more options make it into the game and with massive scope for community-driven enhancements, Codo is sure to command a small but enviable position at the frontier of the games industry. In all but name, X-COM has come home. **PC**

TERROR FROM THE PAST

If you missed Laser Squad first time around, here are the basics.

If we briefly scoot back to 1988, apart from offering a finely tuned tactical game, Laser Squad was also one of the few games that offered a multiplayer game to match its single-player one. Players took it in turns by choosing and equipping a squad of space marines, deploying

them on a map, then expelling action points on moving about and killing the enemy. Cleverly, you couldn't see the enemy unless they came into your field of view, and if you knew one was behind a wall and you had the right weapon, you could blow the wall away and take your enemy with it.

X-COM picked up where Laser Squad began, offering as extras a 3D isometric view rather than a 2D overhead one, plus a big ol' dollop of resource management and research options. If you wanted to, you could call Laser Squad Nemesis 'X-COM Nemesis' – if it would make you feel any better (or younger).

You can play a Java version of an old Laser Squad mission at www.geocities.com/SoHo/Bistro/9987/lsquad/.

Side: Laser Squad	Creds: 34
Major's Auto gun	
Corporal Jonian	0
Corporal Jones	0
Private Anderson	0
Private O'Hara	0
Private O'Hara	0
Private Stone	0
Private Straker	0
Armed Parker	0
Press F10 to display	

Play the classic Moonbase Assault level from your browser.



ASHERON'S CALL: DARK MAJESTY



★ £19.99 (monthly sub: £9.95) • Microsoft • Out now • www.asheroncall.com

Rising house prices... the stress of decorating... *Les Ellis* discovers there's no escape from it in the fantasy world either

The world of online RPGs is in turmoil. There are only a finite number of players out there and an ever increasing number of games vying to relieve them of their hard-earned cash. Verant may have a head start with *EverQuest* sat at the top of the pile worldwide, but with *Dark Ages Of Camelot* breaking all records (and soon to be unleashed on Europe), *Neocron* well on the way and the looming shadow of *Star Wars Galaxies* on the distant horizon, the games that are already out there are pulling out all the stops to try and prevent their players defecting.

Microsoft's *Asheron's Call* is following *EQ* down the expansion pack route with *Dark Majesty*. However, in an attempt to coerce more pissed-off *EQ* and *Ultima* players to try something different, they are including the complete version of the original game in the *Dark*

Majesty package, but keeping it at an add-on price. If the superior graphics and far superior gameplay weren't already enough to convince the *EQ* addicts to visit the MMORPG equivalent of the Betty Ford Clinic, the new elements introduced in this expansion should be enough to convince them. There's more to life than camping spawns for weeks on end, or epic quests that are designed to keep you addicted to the game and ensure you don't spend your monthly subs anywhere else.

As you would expect, developer Turbine has taken this opportunity to introduce new quests. It has also included all the recent patch tweaks to reduce the amount of time you'll waste downloading extras if you are a total newbie to the game. But the two most important additions, and the reason why this is a separate expansion rather than a straight patch, are the houses and the

new land. The housing system that has proved hugely popular in *Ultima Online* has finally found its way to *Asheron's*.

HOME SWEET HOME

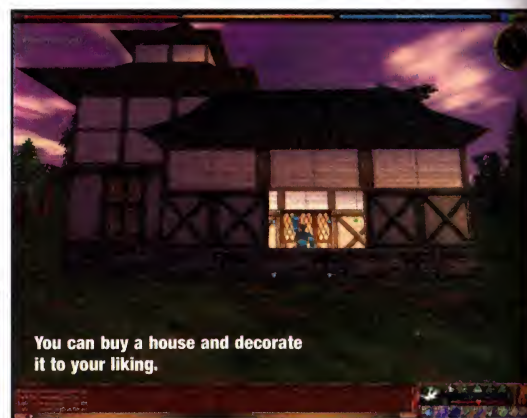
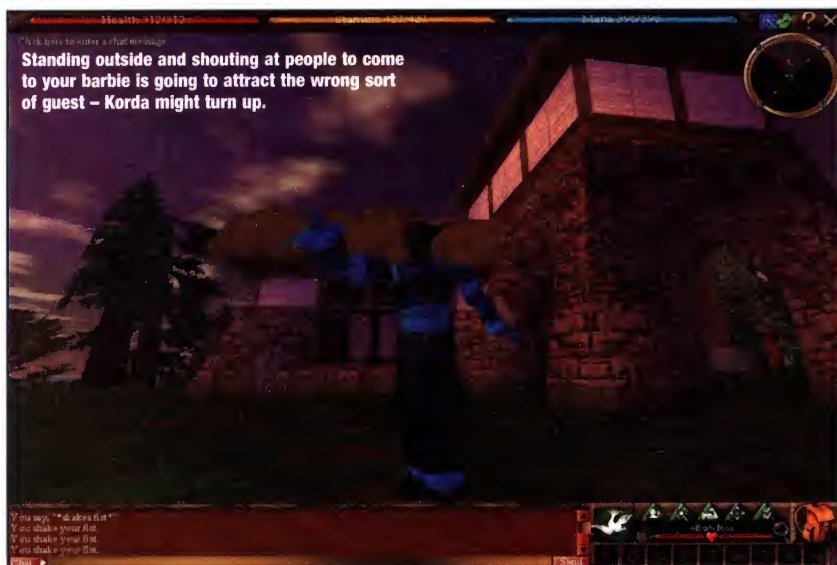
Housing is much more than a way of curing the overcrowding near town halls and the prominence of mule characters. As has been shown in *Ultima Online*, giving punters the chance to have an online home and decorate it the way they want keeps them in the game – and if they're in, they're paying. There are three types of building available to live in, and six different varieties of each. The smallest cottage is impressive, but build up to a villa and your rewards for perseverance are obvious. The rooms are beautifully ornate and there are chests everywhere to store items. Even better though are the hooks that allow you to decorate rooms with objects

you buy or loot elsewhere in the game.

In other words, you can personalise your house as much as you can afford to. The ultimate goal is a mansion, but that will be available in a patch later on and will come at a huge cost to those players who have already built up allegiances. The new housing element brings a *Sims*-type feel to the game, and it won't be long before people find themselves spending as much time getting their houses right for guild parties as they do actual questing. And it won't be long before custom houses resembling *Ultima's* '70s

nightclubs or *Neocron's* fight clubs start springing up. On a side note, you'll be able to grant access privileges to another player to store items in your house or to rest there safely.

To buy a house takes more than just money – you will need to be in possession of certain objects, or have completed certain tasks when the houses come up on the market. After the initial sales, the houses enter into the game's economy, with players free to sell them if they want. Unlike *Ultima* however, the houses won't degrade and disappear if you don't play or maintain them. You pay a



The chance to decorate their online home keeps punters in the game – and if they're in, they're paying

Of all the gardeners in all the world, I pull one that can fight.

The spell effects have been tweaked – even David Blane wouldn't be able to figure this one out.

That ceiling is going to be a sod to paint.

regular upkeep cost and can even set that to automatic if you're going to be away from the game for a while.

LOVE TO GO A-WANDERING

No expansion would be complete without the addition of a huge new land to explore and adventure in, and *Dark Majesty* is not slouching on that front. The new island is called Marae Lassel and is almost the same size as Dereth's Obsidian Plain. The new cities have a very old, lived-in feel, and it's not long before you forget that these places are new and start to concentrate on what the new quests entail, and the characters that surround them. Are the new landscapes different enough, though? Hell yes. The environments are much more detailed than you would have seen before – just wait till you see the dam with

the waves lapping against it. See if you can resist the urge to jump in.

As you would expect, there are dozens of new creatures on this mysterious island. These range from amusing-for-the-newbies-to-kill to the awesome monsters that would intimidate even the most battle-hardened *Asheron's* veteran. But don't think this takes away from the independent theme of *Asheron's* gameplay; you won't have to resort to getting in groups like in *EverQuest* – most quests are do-able solo.

VYING FOR YOUR ATTENTION

With more patches promised in the near future to add even more quests and features to the game, *Asheron's Call* is far from dying as an online game.

Dark Majesty

should provide enough new elements for veteran players to stay interested in the game and the improved graphics, which really are a light year ahead of *EverQuest*, may even be enough to tempt players of other games to give it a go. It's an absolute must-have for existing *Asheron's* players and with the full game bundled for free, basically it's a great incentive for newbies.

Is it enough to knock back *EverQuest*? Ultimately, no. In the end, it'll be *Dark Ages Of Camelot* that will pose the biggest threat to all the online role-players out there. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P333

Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES**

zone.com membership **WE SAY**

Sounds about right, but ADSL or cable broadband would be a godsend

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS The houses give you the chance to express yourself • Graphics looking better than ever • Plenty of new quests to get involved in

DOWNERS Can be intimidating for newbies • You may spend as much time decorating as you do killing • *DAOC* is on the horizon

★★★★★
Bigger and better than ever

Where's Rod Hull?

PLAYASMANAGER 2

★ £5-£10 per season (depending on division) • Anco • Out now •
www.playasmanager.com

It's still the only online management sim with 3D matches.

Mark Hill checks out the update

No matter how many times we've knocked Anco's series in the past (way back when it was still going under the *Player/Manager* moniker), it always comes back for another go. The online version, which went live earlier this year, saw the game finally find its feet without having to compete with the depth of *CM* or the slickness

they're still scrappy and still feature world-class strikers missing one sitter after another, with five players running after the ball like kids and defenders tripping each other over.

The overhead scanner view has been spruced up considerably too, and has more information and options, but it's still too bewildering to be useful. Once you're inside the game you can also see a

stats are very dodgy and while a disclaimer saying all resemblance with real players is coincidental remains, it's there to fend off possible libel action rather than to excuse poor research. The transfer market also remains a joke, making it dead easy for a modest team to buy all the top players in the world as long as it can afford them (and Fulham can).

Anyone who enjoyed the first one will find a lot to enjoy here, especially if you get in the same league as your mates, while the introduction of European leagues (only the Italian one was up and running at the time of writing) should provide an even bigger incentive to carry on. It won't win over hardcore *Champ Man* fans, but casual managers should certainly give it a go. **PCZ**

"The game features the stats for the new season and many other improvements"

of EA's *FA Manager* series. *PlayAsManager 2* isn't as much a sequel as a spit 'n' polish update, featuring all the player transfers for the new season and a host of improvements, while actually bringing the cost per season down. So you really can't go wrong.

MAKEOVER

The first thing you'll notice is how much better the 3D matches look. It's not quite *FIFA*, but it's a big improvement on the earlier version's jerky graphics. They're also played out more realistically, although

noticeable polish to the interface, making the first effort look clunky in comparison. The biggest changes, though, are the introduction of an assistant manager who gives you his opinion of who should be playing in the first team and the option we've already seen in other online management sims of specifying substitutions and tactical changes in accordance with how the matches go.

WRONG

A lot of the criticisms remain, however, because they are inherent to the series. Player

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Better 3D matches • Downloads are short • More tactical options
DOWNERS Poor stats • Joke transfer system • Lacks depth

★★★★★
Slicker and sturdier, but far from perfect



Tactical instructions are not as complex as those in *Soccersim* but they're a welcome addition.



Your assistant manager won't always agree with you.



Zoom in and out of the action at will.



Defenders are as useless as usual.



The scanner is faster and offers you highlights.

STRONGHOLD V1.1

★ £29.99 • Take 2 • Out now • www.stronghold-game.com

Even at his ripe old age, *Richie Shoemaker* is still the proud owner of a Lego castle

If you've ever trodden on a child's sandcastle, thrown a Lego masterpiece from a window or taken a cordless hairdryer to a snowman, you'll know how much fun it is to destroy something someone else has spent hours building. The same is true, of course, in computer games: since the immortal *Command & Conquer* we have been able to fire up a multiplayer map, build up an immaculately sprawling base, and watch it burn in flames as the enemy tanks roll over the few men remaining in defence. Whether you're on the receiving end or not, the PC isn't short of epic real-time battles.

Despite its heavy *Age Of Empires* influence, *Stronghold* takes a slightly different premise for its online battles. Each side starts with its own

basic castle, which must be expended and developed if you are to win the day. With walls already in place, rushing is a tactic virtually off the menu, as players first begin to bring in resources, then wall themselves in before the final push to churn out pikemen, archers, knights and the essential engineers with their ability to build siege engines.

With no fog of war option in the game, it's personal opinion that will dictate how you feel about being able to see the entire map and what goes on across it. The one downside is that surprise attacks are out of the question, as even while you are consumed with other matters, your troops will shut the gates and defend your home to the last.

It's the castles rather than the battles that take centre stage and with players usually

taking a defensive stance, battles are typically long in coming and the overall war over rather too quickly. As soon as a few troops get inside, the floodgates are open and the weakest chink in your armour can easily bring about your downfall. Though fun and certainly more involved than *Age Of Empires* or *Cossacks* in the castle side of things, there isn't much room for error or counter-attack. What this game needs is a multiplayer Siege option; one player with a castle, the other just with an attacking force. As it stands, *Stronghold* is all about the building up rather than the knocking down.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Better than its rivals at castle building and resource gathering • Great humour

DOWNERS The fighting lacks the scale of the building • No fog of war option • Maps too few and a little too small

★★★★★

Great foreplay, shame about the climax



Unfortunately you can't send your cattle into battle.



Watch what your enemy is up to.



You need more than bricks and mortar to keep your castle safe.

ROBOFORGE V1.3

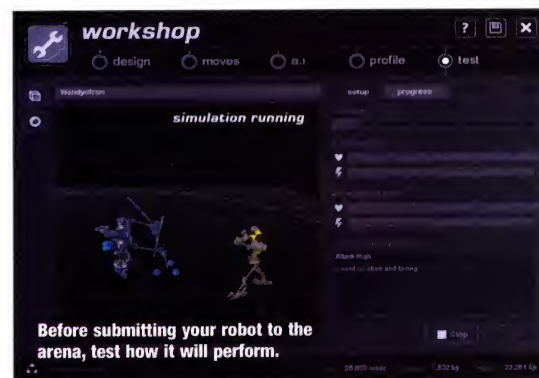
★ US\$19.95 • Liquid Edge Games • Out now • www.roboforge.com

As a child, *Phil Wand* ate Lego. Will *RoboForge* be as tasty?

The lawyers wouldn't allow it, but *RoboForge* would be an instant best-seller if it were renamed *Robot Wars For Windows* or *Home BattleBots Kit*. Anyone

who's ever watched the TV shows will have dreamt about entering a killer android, and they would leap at the chance of taking part without having to dismantle wheelchairs and talk to Craig Charles.

More of a thing to watch than a game to play, the *RoboForge* software allows you to create, customise, program and train 3D robots with the prime purpose of battling other machines online from around the world. Although you can take the cookie cutter approach, with wizard-style multiple choices filling in for your lack of design skills, you can also build your 'bots from scratch, personalising their every aspect from power source to paint scheme. If your design is good enough to win, US\$5 buys you entry into the Pro Circuit tournament where top prize money stretches into the thousands.



Robots are taught to perform manoeuvres by positioning them in a number of poses, much like an Aardman animator, and letting *RoboForge* make the in-between moves. They are then programmed with a rudimentary AI, defined from linking branches on a decision tree, and trundled into an arena to wreak havoc. Chunky graphics and poor sound mean the adrenaline is slow to flow, but inexplicably the whole process proves rather addictive. So if you fancy

your chances at designing intelligent Lego, visit the *RoboForge* website and download the trial version now.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Unique and different • Addictive • Surprisingly accessible

DOWNERS Dated graphics • Naff sounds • Can be slow-paced

★★★★★

Slow but strangely compelling



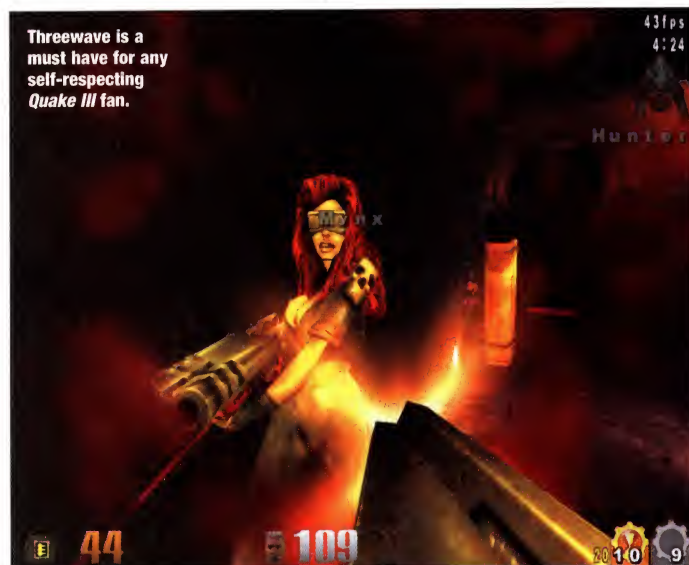
Battles can be long, drawn out and boring, but mysteriously you'll be glued to your seat.

THREEWAVE CTF 1.0



★ Needs full version of *Quake III* (patched to v130) • www.threewave.com

Tony Lamb gets psyched about one of the best *QIII* mods to date



Threewave is a must have for any self-respecting *Quake III* fan.



Fragfesting at its best.

At 129Mb, *Threewave CTF* is a hefty mod, and, in fact, it's quite possible that if you're one of the older *Quake* fans around, then the name might ring a bell or two. This is because the mod has a history that goes all the way back to *Quake I*, when the team introduced the CTF idea to id's original game.

This is an illustrious lineage indeed, and this latest version carries on the proud tradition of mod excellence with no less than five different game types. These include *Threewave CTF*, *Classic Threewave CTF*, *Threewave Capture Strike* and *Threewave-tweaked* versions of the individual and team Deathmatches. There's almost

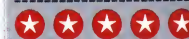
too much going on to list for one mod, so make sure you have a good look at the website to find out about all of the features. It's also fair to say, however, that much of this mod has been done before, and apart from the *Team Fortress*-style Capture Strike, many of the features appear in one form or another in other mods. But

here they are melded seamlessly into one subtly nuanced whole, to make a great *Quake III* experience.

Add to this concoction a top-notch set of maps, a new nailgun weapon, a grappling hook in classic CTF style and a comfortably friendly interface, and *Threewave CTF* is confirmed as a must-have.

PCZVERDICT

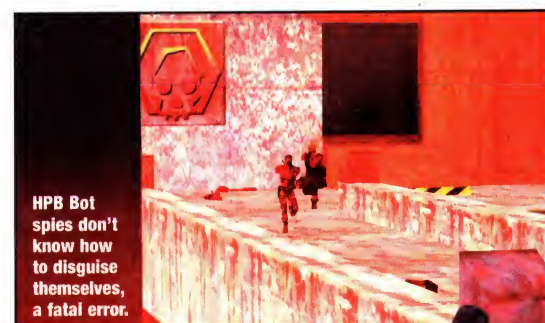
↑ **UPPERS** Feature-packed • Easy interface • Top-class CTF
↓ **DOWNERS** Monster file size • It's only for *Quake III* • Best with human opponents



So good it makes your teeth itch



There's no faulting an HPB bot's aim.



HPB Bot spies don't know how to disguise themselves, a fatal error.

THE HPB BOT



★ Needs full version of *Half-Life* • www.planethalflife.com/botman/hpb_bot

Tony Lamb finally meets his match

Usually, the best way to practice a first-person shooter is to fight bots. This is where games like *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* have had the edge over *Half-Life*, but thank goodness for Botman whose creation – the HPB Bot – is one seriously good AI enemy, and an essential download for any fan.

Now up to version 10, the HPB Bot will run not only on *TFC* and *CS*, but also on vanilla *Half-Life*, *Front Line Force*, *HL: Opposing Force*, *Holy Wars* and *Deathmatch Classic*. This covers most of the big *HL* mods, and with most of the

same tactics and skills applying across the board it is possible to train in a supported mod, and then use your new-found edge in a different arena.

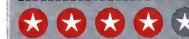
The HPB Bot is flexible and can be adjusted in skill terms from cannon-fodder-stupid to something approaching Dirty Harry on speed. Not only this, but the bot can operate in LAN games and you could run a human team against a small army of them. In *TFC*, the bot engineers will build sentry guns, the snipers will pick you off with frightening accuracy and all of them will happily

switch to a crowbar weapon to batter your brains out.

The mod could do with a friendlier interface and more straightforward set-up, but this is a small price to pay overall.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Superb bot for *Half-Life*, *Team Fortress Classic*, *Counter-Strike* and more
↓ **DOWNERS** Can be frighteningly realistic • Unfriendly interface



Smarter than the average human

HL RALLY – ALPHA PREVIEW

★ Needs full version of *Half-Life* • www.hlrally.net

Tony Lamb gets rally excited

In PC gaming, if you want to thrash a car around then you have to buy *TOCA* or *Colin McRae*, and while a few other FPS mods have usable vehicles, very few are 100 per cent vehicle-based. There's a good reason for this – it's bloody difficult – but the *HL Rally* team have nonetheless grabbed the bull by the horns and are working flat out to create something special.

It's still early days, but a quick glance at the vehicle models shows that a lot of effort is going into them, with a good variety of cars already available including the Ford Focus and Lancia Delta Integrale. The final version will feature many more (including a VW Beetle for some bizarre reason). At this stage, the vehicle physics and maps need

work – you get the feeling you're piloting a house brick rather than a race-tuned rally car – but this is to be expected in an alpha and the team are tackling this weakness already. Maps are, of course, limited at this point too, but many more are under development.

HL Rally is also destined to be a fully-fledged multiplayer outing, and if the team can pull this off then the mod will look even more attractive – 16-player rally battles anyone?

PCZVERDICT

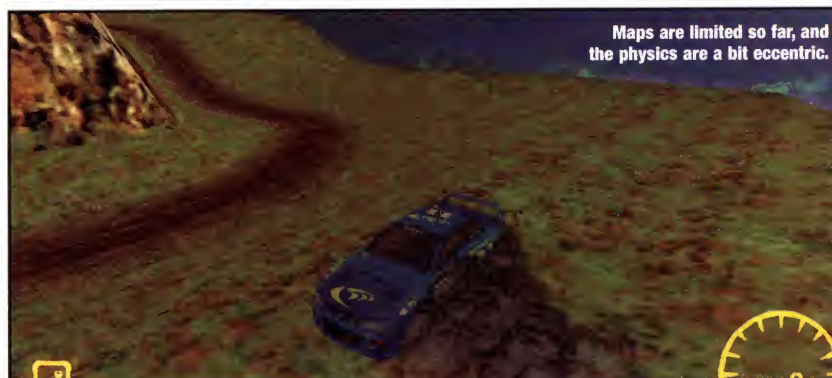
↑ **UPPERS** A free rally driving game • Could be a classic
↓ **DOWNERS** Maps and model physics need work



Nice little motah



HL Rally may be a youngster, but it's setting its standards high.



Maps are limited so far, and the physics are a bit eccentric.

FULL METAL JACKET

★ Needs full version of *Quake III Arena* (patched to v130) • www.planetquake.com/fmj

Tony Lamb Pyles on the misery

For issue 101, the *Full Metal Jacket* team was kind enough to let us have a dig around in the alpha version of their mod, and very quickly the favourable adjectives began to flow. The maps were stunning, rich in looks and clever in design, the interface user-friendly, the background sounds evocative

of the lush jungle surroundings, and the '60s music the cream on a very satisfying gaming dessert. Unfortunately, while still lush to look at, *Full Metal Jacket Beta 1* is badly let down by a couple of glaring faults. For a start, there are no bots. Secondly, the absence of online servers

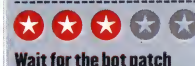
means that you're stuck if you want to have any opponents to kill, and lastly it can crash on map-change too. People won't watch a 56k dial-up groan its way through a file this big if it doesn't actually do anything.

Unfortunately then, the public beta of *FMJ* doesn't score as well as the alpha did.

But don't write *FMJ* off just yet – we haven't – as it's still one of the best-looking *Quake III* mods around. We're eagerly awaiting the update patches that will solve its problems and the team says that these are being worked on. So, check out the website now – because by the time you read this it might be sorted.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Outstanding maps and plenty of 'em • Looks great • Huge potential
↓ **DOWNERS** No bots • Patchy online support • Bugs need some work



Wait for the hot patch



FMJ maps are truly indicative of the location.



FMJ still needs plenty of work.



Who said the GIs in Vietnam didn't appreciate the finer things in life?

READERS' FREE-FOR-ALL

Who were the best players of our November FFA? *Martin Korda* tells it how it was

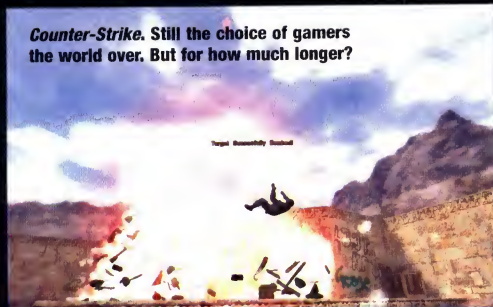
Was there ever any doubt? After the relative lack of popularity of the *Unreal Tournament* server over the last couple of months, we decided to run two *Counter-Strike* servers for our November Free-For-All. Once again, there were loads of you who were a little too good for comfort, ie you were miles better than us. Bastards. However, in our defence we hadn't played the game since the last free-for-all, due to spending so much time on *AvP2*. And with the release of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *AvP2*, we'll probably be running something other than *Counter-Strike* on our servers in the near future, but for now we're sticking with it for the first free-for-all of 2002.

Star Players of the Month this time round were [GM] Martin [GUN], -Ishady.Onel-, [45^XoCeT]-T-, -IKid-ONEI-, Pellet, C@LL1sT0, [RATM]eXp, Phlegmy, [TNC] Chojin, Looney UK, (*UFO*) Vortex and [Sh.S] un petit lapin blue. Nice one all.

I was, however, saddened to see that after my heart-felt plea to you all to assume easy-to-write-down pseudonyms while playing *CS*, many of you chose even more confusing ones (see above) than last time, although one discerning individual did take up my suggestion of Deathlord. Thankfully, though, we didn't have any truly idiotic names such as Enormo Todger Man. So from now on, along with the Star Players of the Month award, we're going to be running an Online Twats Award. If you've been playing on any *CS* server and you've spotted a particularly pathetic, utterly indecipherable name or desperate pre-pubescent plea for sex, then send the details and a small explanation of why you think you should win to: letters@pczone.co.uk with the title Online Twats, and you could win yourself a prize (so long as you

send your name and address with your entry).

So stay alert and remember, it's our mission to expose these online simpletons and make an example of them, if for no other reason than for our own perverse enjoyment.



Counter-Strike. Still the choice of gamers the world over. But for how much longer?

PC ZONE Free-For-All

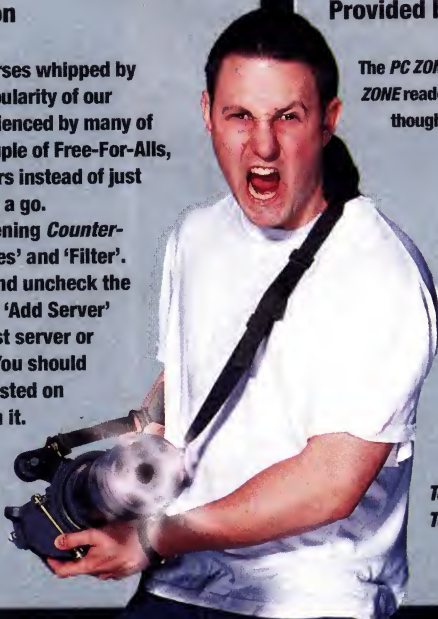
GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action

Fancy a real challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the Free-For-All. Due to the massive popularity of our *Counter-Strike* server and the frustration experienced by many of you while trying to get a game over the last couple of Free-For-Alls, we've decided to run two *Counter-Strike* servers instead of just one. Which means double the chance of getting a go.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click 'Play CS' then 'Internet Games' and 'Filter'. Check the box for 'Are In My Favourites List' and uncheck the other boxes. Now click 'Filter' again, and click 'Add Server' then type: 195.149.48.59:27016 to join the first server or 195.149.48.58:27016 to join the second one. You should now see a server called 'PC ZONE Challenge' listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12noon. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to give everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.



FREE-FOR-ALL

Monday Jan 7, 2002

7:00pm - 10:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

COUNTER STRIKE: TWO SERVERS



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods

Richie Shoemaker

Martin Korda

Anthony Holden

Colin Mackleworth

Matthew Cheshire

David McCandless

Paul Presley

Phil Clark

Mark Hill

KID UNKNOWN

ZAPATERO

NAMELESS ONE

SHOKUPAN

M.A.C.H.I.N.E

BURNSIDE

MAQUA

I R BABOON

SHIT KICKER

LEATHERFACE

HAVE A GO

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27966

Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.49:27015

Counter-Strike Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.49:27020

Counter-Strike Public Server #3 - 194.93.134.51:27015

Counter-Strike Public Server #4 (*PC ZONE* map pack)

- 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.52:7787

Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.50:27015

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: cave



The essential resource for all Nintendo gamers



① "Like cattle, but in a strange way, cattle on bikes."



② This is about as exciting as it gets.

CYCLING MANAGER

★ £19.99 • Xicat • Out now

Steve Hill tucks his trousers into his socks. Don't ask why

No, we're not making this up. In fact, we don't think we could. But why not? Cycling is a recognised sport – it's massive in Europe – and presumably managers do exist. That isn't necessarily reason enough to develop a game, but that's exactly what somebody has done. And it's

clearly a labour of love, offering surprising depth, passable graphics, and the relaxing whirr of chain on gears.

Races take about 20 minutes and your job is to dictate tactics to your riders, be it forming relays, launching attacks, or simply sprinting for the line. You can also

tell them when to take a drink, and can even watch them doing so via a rudimentary animation (although piss-stops aren't included). Off the road, there's wheeling and dealing to be done as you attempt to assemble a decent team, with each rider rated in terms of endurance,

intelligence, acceleration, recovery and so forth.

And? And it's terrible, obviously. You might as well start a race and go and do the washing-up, such is the level of interactivity. The statistics are bewildering, and you would really have to be a passionate fan of cycling to garner any enjoyment from the experience. Next.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Double everything

PCZVERDICT

① **UPPERS** You can turn the music off •
See Europe at your own pace
② **DOWNERS** Incredibly niche •
Interactivity is limited

30 On yer bike!

SILENT HUNTER II

★ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Dan Emery delves deep underwater to uncover another average sub game

There is something dreadfully quirky about submarine sims. They're not exactly thick on the ground, and the original *Silent Hunter* came out back in 1995. Yet the game has a hardcore following that just never say die, so to them *Silent Hunter II* must be manna from heaven. Or at least a nice fish supper.

From the outset it is blatantly obvious that the game is not pitched at the casual gamer. The tutorials, although a welcome feature, rely heavily on the gamer reading the manual. No interactive help, or walkthrough steps to be found. Again, this makes the learning curve steep.

Beyond the most basic functions 'point finger, aim submarine that way', the game is a complex sim recreating the

scary days of a U-boat captain in World War II. The main combat also takes place underwater, as any attempt to engage in surface combat results in one less U-boat. Which is a pity, as the surface combat is the easiest area for a novice to get into. Torpedoes take up to 30 minutes to reload (thankfully you can speed up the clock) and depth charges explode right when you least expect them. Well it made us jump.

Once you do master all the controls (there's a lot to learn) the game becomes absorbing and loads of fun. Perhaps less hardcore than *Sub Command* (reviewed last issue), the game feels more coherent and marginally more atmospheric. The graphics are clean and functional rather than gobsmacking and

overall it feels like being in *Das Boot* without the cheesy soundtrack. But the unfriendly tutorials, complex system and limited graphics consign this game to the 'cult not classic' category. The best sub sim around, which isn't saying much.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PIII 600 with
128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

① **UPPERS** Atmospheric • A long-awaited sequel
② **DOWNERS** A bit too 'hardcore' •
Steep learning curve • Limited graphics

67 A complex but fiddly simulation

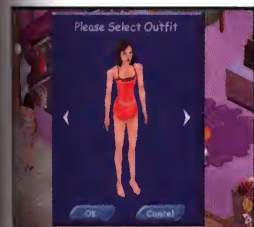


THE SIMS: HOT DATE

£19.99 • EA • Out now

Mark Hill reinstalls *The Sims* for the third time this year and gets a surprise

If at first it was heralded as an intriguing advance in computer games that captured everyone's imagination, *The Sims* has quickly turned into the monstrous gaming equivalent of Steps: ultra-commercial, inane, fluffy and unstoppable. After setting up permanent residence in the



You can make your female 'friends' try on saucy outfits.

charts with a string of moneymaking add-ons that added only more money to Maxis' coffers, it's with some trepidation that I flung *Hot Date* on. But this isn't a quickly cobbled-together pack that lets you ring up a neighbour for a date, in the same way that the last expansion *House Party* let you invite friends over. It's actually a significant addition that will be worth every penny for all those *Sim*-lovers that have kept the series in the Top Ten so long.

Part of the success of *The Sims* is that it's the first title to explore a market that Japan has been exploiting for ages: dating games. But as well as adding the expected love-related new

objects (sauna, love tub, cuddle couch), *Hot Date* incorporates a whole new area into the game called Downtown. This is made up of restaurants, shops, cafes and plenty of other places you would take a lady if only you weren't such a stingy ugly mutt. There are also a lot more options when interacting with people, making relationships more complex and controllable.

It's still a sickening Barbie and Ken simulation fit only for spineless maladjusted individuals, but at least it's not a complete rip-off.



A sweet shop – as if the game wasn't saccharine enough.



The diner isn't the most romantic place to eat, but they do great hairy pie.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300
Memory 64Mb **WE SAY** You'll need more memory this time round

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS New area to explore • Better character interaction • Lots of new NPCs
DOWNERS Needs a lot of patience • Same game at heart

71 Not just a Christmas cash-in

FAMILY FORTUNES

£19.99 • Infogrames • Out now

We asked 100 people who they wanted to review this game, and the survey said... **Dave Woods**

"Name a kind of ache." "Fillet-o-fish." "Name something that flies that doesn't have an engine." "A bicycle." Proof that the general public is one painting short of a surrealist exhibition, (all of these are genuine answers from the show), *Family Fortunes* is one of the long-standing institutions of British TV. You watch it when you're young enough to appreciate it, skip 30 years when the brain is fully functioning before returning to it in the mushy older years because you recognise the bloke asking the questions and it reminds you of happier times. But a PC version?

If you've been culturally deprived, the aim of the game is to second guess the British public ("We asked 100 people to name something they like to do in the shower..."), gain control

of the board and win money by getting all the popular answers without making three mistakes. If you're unsuccessful, the other family can nip in and 'steal' the cash by guessing just one of the remaining answers.

Unfortunately there are inherent problems with a PC conversion. You have to type in your answers, and although the developers have obviously tried to make the myriad of similar but different answers acceptable, they haven't accommodated for poor spellers. I put in 'bolognese' ("Name a dish made from minced beef") and it didn't want to know, preferring the family from Bedfordshire's answer of 'spaghetti bolognese'. Seeing as the show's aimed at simpletons, this is no trivial matter.

Also, the fact that you can buzz in straight away, before you or your opponent has had a chance to read the opening question, and then sit, think about it and answer in your own time has already caused some serious fall-outs in the *ZONE* office. In the notoriously fragile Christmas period this could easily end in tears.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166
Memory 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 40Mb hard disk space **WE SAY** And the survey said: double your memory

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS Les Dennis • Good fun – if you've got enough people • Customisable families
DOWNERS Have to be able to spell • Too easy to 'cheat'

57 Better than *Heartbeat*



Proof that anyone can make it in Blair's Britain.



If this is the top answer you're going home with the car...

REAL WAR

★ £29.99 • Simon & Schuster • Out now

It's not real and it's not war, as Martin Korda painfully found out

What's your name soldier? Sir, *Real War* sir. And what are you soldier? Sir, I'm an isometric-cum-3D RTS, based around a conflict between the USA and a terrorist organisation called the ILA sir. Really? Looks to me like you're a pathetic excuse for an RTS, released criminally unfinished to cash in on a current world conflict. Sir, no sir. Bullshit. Never have I seen such a blatant attempt to exploit a war for the purposes of selling a game. Sir, no sir. Well that's what it seems like to me soldier. Show me your graphics (looks at screenshots). What the hell are these? Those tanks look like the kind of mess left by your thumb after you've stopped using it to pick your arse and tried to

master finger-painting. What else have you got soldier? Sir, two campaigns (US or ILA) and a skirmish mode sir. I suppose next you'll be telling me there are extensive tech trees. Sir yes, sir. Well we've never seen one of these before have we? A collection of predictable building upgrades thrown together with less thought than was put into thinking of your name. Sir, I've got over 60 authentic units sir. Well bung me out with a shit-stained toilet brush, I do believe we've finally found something you're good at *Private Real War*, tell me more. Sir, I've got everything from special units to nuclear weapons, and all the latest US ground, air and sea technology sir. Well it's just as

well there's something going for you, because you've got more bugs than a cheap treacle-covered whore trapped in an ants' nest. Your units have worse pathfinding skills than a bunch of blind boy scouts, and you've made *Full Metal Jacket* star R Lee Erme's commentary sound like he's an over-acting idiot. Get the hell off my machine and stop contaminating my software. Sir thank you sir. No problem son.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 333
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb
3D card **WE SAY** PIII 500 with 128Mb
RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Huge collection of units •
Frenetic battles

DOWNERS Bug-ridden • Pathetic
graphics • Dreadful pathfinding •
Dodgy AI • R Lee Erme's script

32 I didn't know they
stacked shit this high



PATRICIAN 2: QUEST FOR POWER

★ £29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Entering choppy waters: Keith Pullin

Before *Patrician 2*, *Tai Pan* on the 128K Spectrum was the only seafaring game I'd ever liked. Indeed, I still play it now on a Speccy emulator and in my humble opinion that and *Elite* are the best trading games ever. *Patrician 2* doesn't change my opinion, but that's not to say that this real-time strategy/trading game doesn't deserve some recognition.

Set in Europe at the turn of the 14th century, *Patrician 2* contains your usual seafaring predicaments plus some unexpected bonuses. As well as pirate ships, treasure, trading and scurvy there's also a large amount of town and citizen management which, if handled astutely, leads to you becoming mayor and enjoying a life of dubious pleasures.

If however that all sounds a bit corrupt and/or official, there's the saltier sea dog option of becoming a convoy leader or harbour master where you get to blow the crap out of pirates with big cannons. Diversity is the key with *Patrician 2*, and there's very little here that isn't covered. You even get rival towns attacking each other, not to mention sailors who get smashed on your valuable cargo of wine the moment the ship leaves port.

In fact, it's easy to spend far longer playing this than you



originally expected. And judging by what others at *ZONE* have said about games like *Corsairs* and *Age Of Sail 2*, *Patrician 2* is probably the best of its genre. OK, so you have to be abnormally dedicated to fully appreciate its depth, but if you want a long-lasting, seriously challenging and diverse trading game, this should float your boat.

TECH SPECS

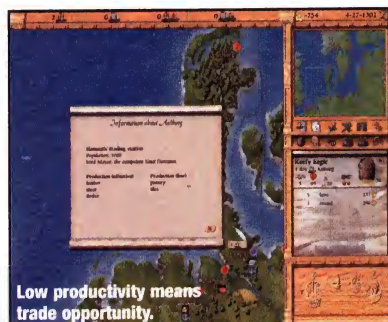
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
100Mb HD space **WE SAY** PII 500,
128Mb RAM, 500Mb HD space and
a pretty graphics card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Very detailed • Non-linear
and diverse gameplay • Very nice
town graphics

DOWNERS There are a confusing
amount of options • Needs loads
of time if you want to play it
properly

64 Programmed by
Germans? Never
have guessed



Saitek

The R440 Force Feedback Wheel



...the new
Driving Force

Force Feedback



To view the **FULL** Force Feedback range visit our website at www.saitek.com

BUDGET ZONE

Christmas left you poor? Entertainment still comes cheap

★ SCROOGE Rhianna Pratchett

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

★ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

We feared change. We mumbled the old adage 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' while we waited for the next overhaul of the *Championship Manager* franchise, knowing that our sanity, our souls and very probably the lives of the *CM3* developers were at stake. But we need not have worried because the new engine and the whole host of other features simply added to the appeal and addictiveness of the game.

The major tweaking of the tactics editor in particular meant that any tactics you had learnt in the previous games had to be put aside. A different style of gameplay allowed you to give instructions to individual players, determine both with- and without-the-ball positions and enhance their abilities through training.

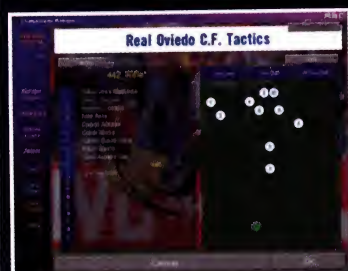
With the option of controlling your reserve team, a regular barrage of emails regarding your players, injuries, the transfer market, general news and more information than is humanly possible to digest, the overall feel is one of depth, atmosphere and detail. Diehard *CM* fans will no doubt already own the latest update *Season 01/02*, but *Championship Manager 3* is a perfect introduction for those not familiar with the series.

PCZVERDICT

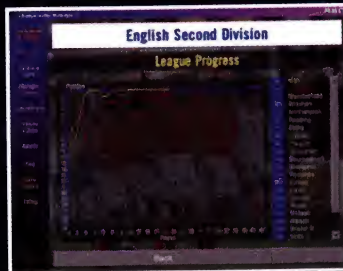
85%



It may not have the latest stats, but at this price who cares?



Life-sappingly addictive...



...no matter what division you're in.



War... what is it good for, apart from a few dozen excellent strategy games?

WARZONE 2100

★ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

Set in the desolate wastelands of North America, *Warzone 2100's* engaging RTS gameplay and beautiful graphics made it one of the earliest 3D strategy games. One of its best features (apart from the rotating, zoomable perspectives), was the unique way in which it allowed you to assemble your units. Instead of units being instantly available, you had to design each one literally piece by piece from the wheels up.

The AI is still very impressive. Your units will actually hunt down enemy units and sweep ahead, rather than trundling behind, while protecting other vehicles. On release *Warzone 2100* put *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun* to serious shame, and emerged as an unexpected gem of an RTS.

PCZVERDICT

78%



It may look bad, but it plays superbly.

ABOMINATION: THE NEMESIS PROJECT

★ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

One of the many titles churned out to ride on the coat-tails of *X-Com*, what made the 3D tactical combat in *Abomination* stand out from the crowd was that it adopted randomly generated missions and a real-time style of gameplay. The object was to control a squad of eight genetically mutated super-soldiers, dubbed The Nemesis Project. These soldiers were entrusted with the task of wiping out a sinister cult, which emerged after the spread of a worldwide plague.

Unfortunately the game suffered from a number of niggling flaws, such as lack of in-mission saves and not-so-hot pathfinding AI. The random mission generator was a nice touch, which made for some varied gameplay, but the downside was that the impact of the storyline was significantly reduced. Flawed but engaging.

PCZVERDICT

70%

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by iiyama



PC Pro | Recommended
VM Pro 413 | October 2001

iiyama

quality | value | support

High Brightness technology from iiyama. The Vision Master Pro 413 is the first CRT to offer unrivalled image quality for business use and a High Brightness mode to add definition and a natural brilliance to moving image applications such as gaming, DVD and video editing.

17" (16" viewable) High Brightness DiamondTron NF | approx 300 cd/m² in High Brightness mode
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FEEDBACK

Two classics and a stinker? **Martin Korda** looks through your letters to see if you agree. And finds that strangely many of you do

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Or you can email them to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Feedback in the subject line

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02

REVIEWED *PCZ* #108, Nov 2001
SCORE 92%

What we said

"Buying the new version of *Championship Manager* is the equivalent of buying a new team shirt, or perhaps a new season ticket. And the cost of the game will be more than covered by the amount of money you'll save sat at home on your arse."

What you thought

★ Well, what can you say? The analogy with some team from Manchester is no longer enough. *Championship Manager* doesn't only leave the competition for dust, it runs right back up to them and gobbles them up one by one.

Sports Interactive has left the opposition with no excuse to make a football management game. The player statistics masking is a brilliant new feature, as is the ability to compare players side by side. The media interaction, as usual, has seen only a minor update, but it's enough to make this game so much better than the previous incarnation.

For those worrying about the similarities from the previous

seasons, then you need look no further than the inclusion of the new transfer system. It seamlessly slots into an already perfect game, making it a pleasure to just sit back and admire the effort that's gone into it, never mind playing the game itself. Admittedly, it's slightly annoying not to find much 'new' stuff in this latest package, but give it a week or so, and all is quickly forgiven.

It won't appeal to non-footballing fans, and it's also

ashamed of yourselves. Instead of working on cheap cash-ins, why aren't you working on getting *CM4* out earlier, because that's what we all want. Why are new statistics and a couple of new small features costing us £25? I refuse to buy this update as I think this should all come as a free patch for all of us loyal fans.

John Littlewood

Comment

I'm sure they love you too, Jacob, especially after such a heartfelt eulogy to what is

"Just because it doesn't have a gun-wielding, alien-killing scientist doesn't make it a bad game"

KILLER QUEEN, WHO RECKONS *MYST III: EXILE* IS GOOD

unlikely to win over any new fans. Those that once loved it or still do, will love it more. Those that hated it really should run for the hills, because it is indeed The Most Important Game Of Your Life. I love you, Sports Interactive.

Jakob Gronkjaer

★ *Championship Manager: Season 01/02* is nothing more than a rip-off. Every year we're made to pay good money for a few new features. Sports Interactive, you should be

unquestionably, the greatest sports management game ever. However, as John states so succinctly, each instalment could also be deemed as little more than a cynical yearly cash-in to keep fans amused until *CM4* appears.

The important question, then, is does each new update seriously add to your enjoyment of the game? In the case of games like *FIFA*, where more often than not the improvements are exclusively aesthetic, it's simply a waste of time and money investing in the inevitable yearly rehash. Where *Championship Manager* differs, is that its annual updates are always purely game-related. They may not provide sweeping changes, but the new stats, general tweaks (like the EU-regulated transfer system), up-to-date team data and the inclusion of the latest batch of emerging talent from around the world, bring with them a whole new dimension and approach to the game which we believe is well worth the investment.

COMMANDOS 2

REVIEWED *PCZ* #108, Nov 2001
SCORE 91%

What we said

"Sequels to successful games are always suspicious

creatures, products of a business impulse rather than the creative drive of an artist, made to make money and cash in on that success rather than developing a genuine artistic vision. Not *Commandos 2*."

What you thought

★ Having seen *Commandos 2*, I bought it on the spur of the moment, and I'm not disappointed one bit. Having played the previous game, I can safely agree that it is an epic in its own right, and that it deserved the praise it received. The 360-degree camera is a godsend and features like the improved interface and new weaponry, items and locations (which are massive), give it the quality associated with its score.

It even has minor details in its graphics and animation (like on the arctic level if you leave your troops for too long they rub their hands together. They also leave footprints in the snow.)

My only negative comment is that the 'sepia-tone tutorial' does not exist, and the starting mission which you showed in the Saving Private Smith box was not the first mission. What's up with that?

I would even go so far as to say that most of the features in this game have been created by pure genius. The puzzles are hard, yet logical, so you never feel like you want to punch the screen out of frustration. The developers deserve to win the Game of the Year Award for this masterpiece.

James Beacroft

★ Upon seeing the huge picture of *Commandos 2* on issue 108 as it fell through my letterbox, I couldn't wait to read what you had to say about it. I was a huge fan of the original and couldn't wait to buy the next instalment, especially after you gave it 91 per cent.

When *Commandos 2* arrived, after getting used to the new interface I was hooked. I played it almost constantly until I completed it. Once I reached the end though, I couldn't believe how quickly I'd got there. Yes, the game was fun to play, detailed, big, original, and I loved the whole bonus thing, but it just wasn't

English Conference

Table Results Fixtures Schedule

League Table

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1st	Chester	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
2nd	Doncaster	2	2	0	0	8	1	6
3rd	Morecambe	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
4th	Dag & Red	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
5th	Farnborough	2	2	0	0	7	4	6
6th	Barnet	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
7th	Forest Green	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
8th	Stalybridge	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
9th	Scarborough	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
10th	Northwich	1	0	0	1	4	4	3
11th	Stevenage	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
12th	Nuneaton Boscobel	1	0	0	1	4	5	3

Team Stats Player Stats Referee Stats Awards History

CM: Season 01/02 is definitely worth the investment.



Many of you agree that *Commandos 2* is one of the hardest strategy games ever.



Just about everyone who's written in loves *Commandos 2*.

difficult enough. In the first game, I can remember countless times when I got stuck and had to try many different approaches to solve a puzzle. However, I didn't get stuck once on this sequel. This, I feel, was the best part of the original game so it was a disappointment that the high standards which were required there weren't needed this time round. In *Commandos 2*, I found whole missions that could be completed by using the same strategy on every German. It was just too easy.

The missions ended up feeling repetitive, but I kept going, hoping that the really difficult and strategic missions were to come. I was particularly surprised at how easy the last mission was.

Now all I can do is hope that the developers address this problem and develop the inevitable add-on to make the game much more difficult.

Matt Devon

Comment

Too easy? Too easy? Are you mad? From what I can gather, most people who wrote in found it harder than a pissed-up Scotsman on PCP. They'd spend hours pouring over each

level, desperately trying to save their men from death, before finally pulling their stricken bodies off the floor along with their spilled-out mush-like brains. However, just about all of you who wrote in are united in the belief that *Commandos 2* is one of the finest strategy games of all time.

Sadly, we have to make a pathetic and grovelling apology to you all, wherein we all point the finger at whoever isn't in the office at the time in order to save ourselves from humiliating recriminations, with regard to the sepia-tone tutorials... which aren't there. The offending screenshot was taken from the official press disc by Dave 'Innocent' Woods, as Mark 'It's All My fault' Hill didn't send us enough screenshots for the review. As Mark works from home we didn't realise these had been dropped until it was too late. Oh yes, and the walkthrough was actually from the demo of the game that we were due to put on our cover disc. We told Mark to include a walkthrough from this level, but when Eidos dropped the demo (because it

was so big they thought no one would buy the game if they released it) we changed the text to read 'from the first level' which we assumed it to be. A simple phone call to Mark Hill would have put us right – the Saving Private Smith mission is actually from mission eight – but his phone manner isn't the best and we try to avoid speaking to him as much as possible, especially late at night on deadline day.

MYST III: EXILE

REVIEWED PCZ #109, Dec 2001

SCORE 35%

What we said

"Minor technological developments aside, this is a wasted opportunity to improve the series."

What you thought

★ I've been a subscriber to PC ZONE for two years now and have always agreed with your reviews. But *Myst III: Exile* surely deserves more than 35 per cent. I've grown

up with the *Myst* trilogy, due to my Dad, and they are probably three of the best games I have ever played. Do you want to know why? Because of the story. In the review, James Lyon mentions the plot once and then doesn't say anything about it again. I think that he just played the game to get the review over and done with and didn't concentrate on it one bit.

Would *Half-Life* be the game it was today if the storyline involved Freeman mindlessly killing vegetables? *HL* has outstanding graphics, but *Exile* has outstanding graphics too. *HL* has a brilliant plot, as does *Exile*. They also both have good puzzle-solving elements. You see a pattern? *Exile* has the most amazing puzzles to date, and the graphics aren't just a slide show, but are actually part of the plot too. The puzzles are incorporated into the backgrounds and the foregrounds of the island, the interiors and exteriors of the buildings and structures. I'm not saying that it deserves to be up there with *Half-Life* and *Deus Ex*, but it deserves more credit than you've given it. Just because it doesn't have a gun-wielding, alien-killing scientist doesn't make it a bad game. Surely it's a matter of opinion.

Killer Queen

★ I've just bought one of the most boring games I've ever played. The offending piece of software is *Myst III: Exile*. It's

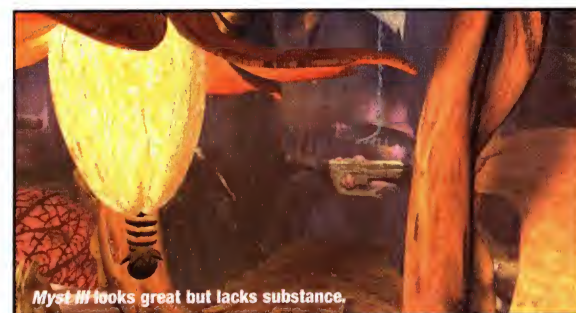
possibly the most tedious game ever. No animations, barely any sound of any note, boring storyline (from what I can understand of it) and uninteresting puzzles. I've seen it in the Top 10 in my local games store and I can only conclude that thousands of others have been duped into buying this by the flashy-looking visuals on the back of the box.

P Bowen aka Cactus Shark

Comment

You're absolutely right, Killer, it is a matter of opinion, and ours is that despite the strong plot and stunning vistas, *Myst III* has barely moved on since the original. We love a good story as much as anyone, and appreciate that there are many people out there like you who glean great enjoyment from slow-paced puzzle-solving games of this type.

However, James played the game thoroughly and came to the conclusion that he couldn't score it higher due to its complete lack of innovation and substance. The difference between *Myst III* and *Half-Life* is that once you strip away the great storylines, one remains suspense-filled and stunningly atmospheric while the other diminishes into a simple set of puzzles set on pretty but static backgrounds. There is a place for games like this, but our gripe with many of them is that they simply refuse to evolve. [X]



Myst III looks great but lacks substance.



Gerard Depardieu blends effortlessly into the background.

REALITY CHECK:

ITOTOCROSS

Steve Hill forgoes The Great Indoors in favour of The Real Thing. Here's mud in your eye...



VS



ack in the day, when motocross was known as scrambling, participants called

Dave or Geoff would earnestly compete in a muddy English field, more for honour than riches. Nowadays, it falls under the umbrella of 'extreme sports', and as such is a Day-Glo extravaganza in which wealthy Americans called Jeremy or Ricky launch themselves into the air in a death-defying spectacle, still finding the time to endorse console games. Somewhere between this transition falls my story, a callow youth competing in the cut-and-thrust world of competitive



Hill gets to grips with his bike.



Hill unheroically navigates a water obstacle.

armour are all donned with unfamiliar enthusiasm. I strap up the helmet and declare myself a biker, scoffing at the beginners' rudiments explained. With a perverse degree of symmetry, an 80cc Honda awaits, which I straddle and kick into first gear.

JUNIOR KICKSTART

I may be a lot older, and a lot heavier, but the bike still packs a punch, and with only a minor twist of the throttle I am propelled forward at pace. I'm back. The old magic is still there, and it's like I've never been away. At the first jump I soar skywards, waving to the crowd below, who rapturously acknowledge this graceful union

of man and machine. All right, that's not strictly true, although the front wheel does slightly rise off the ground.

This is definitely no game, and the most noticeable difference is the sheer physical effort involved. With the bike bucking and sliding all over the track, body weight has to be shifted rapidly to keep it from getting out of shape and tossing you into the mud. Another key skill is opting for the right line on the track, something that games generally fail to acknowledge. I soon get the measure of it though, and swiftly move up to a 250cc machine. This is even more of a wrestle, but I maintain a steady pace in third gear, although this is put into

perspective when a junior champion zips past in a flash. I attempt to keep pace for a few seconds, but it's fruitless, and the next I see of him is when he laps me again. It's no coincidence that the games featured here are named after mental illness.

In my favour, I manage to stay on the bike, although vague humiliation ensues when I have to get someone to restart it after a stall. Technically, I can ride, although the confidence to do so at anything approaching high speed has long gone, as has the fitness to be able to endure more than half an hour. It's a lot of fun, but the truth is I am a fat, frightened man. Oh well, back to the joypad. [E]

schoolboy motocross. Blessed with natural talent, a fearless demeanour, and an 80cc Honda, I could have been a contender. But with only one full season under my belt, and the reality of life in Thatcher's Britain biting hard, the bike was sold, and replaced by something called a ZX Spectrum, on which you could play "computer games". That'll never catch on.

Since those heady days of youth, my only contact with the sport has been through the vicarious medium of games. As *PC ZONE*'s self-appointed motocross expert, I have been exaggerating my achievements for years, insisting that I review every game on the basis that I know what I'm talking about. To be honest, it's an idle boast, but one that has secured me a great deal of work. Hey, a man's got to earn a living.

CALL MY BLUFF

But, as Bing from *Brookside* once observed, revenge is a dish best served cold (yes, we know it's an Oscar Wilde quote). As reward for my claimed expertise, *ZONE* have arranged for me to put my money where my mouth is and attempt to ride a real motocross bike, one that isn't controlled with a joypad, and for which I will have to put some trousers on and leave the sanctuary of my abode.

By a bizarre quirk of fate, (or actually courtesy of Honda Race

Days) I'm back where it all began. Matchams Park near Bournemouth is a bespoke arena where all manner of motor sports are catered for, and it is here that I first gripped the throttle of my trusty steed all those years ago. That was then and this is now, and I am about to find out if playing games has kept my skills intact. However, whereas you can play a computer game in your underpants, this isn't an option here. Big boots, protective kecks, knee pads, elbow pads and body

HOW REAL IS... MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

This is undeniably a highly polished game with a wealth of options, but the criterion here is how the handling in the motocross section compares with the real thing. Not too favourably is the answer, with some overly rigid physics making it feel like you're controlling a bike on a stick. The brakes are fairly ineffective, and there are no real powerslides to speak of.

Whereas this model works OK on the races held on wide-open terrain, for tight and twisting motocross tracks, it can be a frustrating affair, offering little in the way of flexibility. Bloody Microsoft.



HOW REAL IS... MOTOCROSS MANIA

A plucky British challenger to the Microsoft behemoth, this appears to have been tragically ignored. It might not look as good as either *Madness* title, and the options are fairly anaemic, but the handling is far more realistic, offering infinite degrees of movement, enabling you to powerslide out of bends, and ready yourself before a jump.

However, the real clincher is the handlebar view, which imparts a tangible sensation of grappling with the bike. The realism of the tracks is debatable though, and one requires negotiating a tree trunk straddling a huge ravine. Come on, lads, that's just way too dangerous.



WIN A PUB

Sick of drink? Lungs blackened from passive smoking? Enter this competition and you can stay at home *and* indulge in the King of Sports

Pool, as you probably know, is the best sport in the world (bar football and darts) and even better, you can play it when you're two sheets to the wind. Most often played in pubs, for small amounts of cash or beer, the proficient player can regularly enjoy free nights out at other people's expense. But how to get good? It doesn't do much for your social standing to be seen in the pub by yourself all hours of the day. And you're not going to get the practice in during long competitive evenings.

There is but one answer, and it usually involves serious expense: a slate table of your own. Luckily, courtesy of Virgin and *Jimmy White's Cueball World*, we've got one to give away, and if that wasn't enough, it's got blue baize to boot, like the tables you see in those big American tournaments featuring talent like Romford Slim. Flash or what? What's more, you can pretend the coin slot's still functional and extort money out of your mates when they come to visit. That's got to be a bonus. Any resistance you might meet will disintegrate come 11.30pm, when

you've been unceremoniously dumped from the pub with an ongoing pool feud to settle.

WINNING IS EASY

All you've got to do is study the list of 'famous' pool players and match them with their tournament nicknames. To give you an example, Jimmy White is affectionately known as The Whirlwind or 'the bloke who chokes on the black when playing Steve Hill'. When you've got them sussed, mark them all down on a postcard and send them in to us at the address below. The first one out of the editor's hat will win the table and a copy of *Jimmy White's Cueball World*. Ten runners-up will receive a copy of the game.

THE PLAYERS

Mika Immonen
Ralf Souquet
Alex Lely
Efen Reyes
Steve Davies

THE NICKNAMES

The Kaiser
The Plague from the Hague
Romford Slim
The Iceman
The Magician

Send your answers to...
I Love Pool, PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF. The closing date is Wednesday 9 January.

IMPORTANT!

Pool tables are big. And some people don't like them. If you're dead set on winning the pool table then please bear in mind that it's going to need a hefty room to sit in, and you're going to need space round the table to cue properly. The dimensions of the table are 7ft x 4ft. If you live with anyone else please ask them what they think about the idea before the thing turns up outside your front door.

★ Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

PC CD-ROM

Jimmy White's Cueball World



An Archer Maclean Production



WIN A PUB POOL TABLE! **COMPETITION**

POOL TABLE!



SOUND INVESTMENT

Eight speaker sets go under the **ZONE** hardware microscope...
Fortunately, it's a very, very large one. *Tim Ponting* reports

Multimedia speakers have come a long, long way in the last ten years.

Thank heavens... because reviewing a handful of such units ten years ago was like sticking your head in a biscuit tin full of ants. Today, the subwoofer has rescued computer audio from the dustbin, though in many ways it's still as much a mixed bag as it was years ago.

The use of a subwoofer and two or more satellite speakers for reproducing full-range stereo or multi-channel audio is based on the principle that our ears cannot distinguish the direction from which bass notes below a certain frequency emanate; in other words, the stereo image is 'built' by the frequencies above this 'crossover' point, and the bass can thus be handled by a single, meaty subwoofer. This 'crossover' point is tuned differently in different speaker sets – generally the lower it is, the better the system performs overall, provided the satellites can handle all frequencies above the crossover. Sadly, often satellites are so small that they can't extend down this far, in which case manufacturers tend to 'tune' their subwoofer at a higher frequency – often above that at which your ears 'get directional'. And this is where subwoofer-sat systems stop working properly. Only the two 4.1 systems reviewed here (from Klipsch and Videologic) had subjectively low enough crossover points for the bass/direction balance to be truly acceptable.

In this group test of speakers, we have all sorts of subwoofer/sat combos, from full six-channel DVD playback systems through quad-surround to small desktop music and gaming stereo set-ups. Though they vary wildly in price, we were generally surprised by the overall good value for money offered across the spectrum.



XS-IV S80

★ TDK • £79.99 • 01737 771 212 • www.tdk.com

I once had a JVC boom box with a long tube-shaped subwoofer, and it sounded fabulous – similar to this beautifully designed compact 2.1 system from TDK. The pipe sub (rated at 20W RMS) even doubles as an ergonomic foot rest! The satellites are tall and flat, using thin panel speaker technology from NXT (check them out at them at www.nxt.co.uk). The bass is loud but a little on the stodgy side, while the satellites are very 'even' and have slightly odd-

sounding stereo imaging used close up – designed to give a wider sweet spot than conventional satellite speakers.

The cabling is kept to the minimum, and the volume controls live on one of the speakers – tiny wheels inset into the speaker face that unfortunately are extremely difficult to turn accurately. There is only a single line in, so you will need to connect all audio sources via your soundcard.

At £80, these speakers certainly aren't cheap, but ultimately you're paying for the build quality and excellent design – except for those daft wheels of course. They look and sound better than the Hercules XPS210s – only you can decide whether or not they are worth twice as much money.

PCZVERDICT

74%

HERCULES XPS210

★ Hercules • £39.99 • 020 8665 1881 • www.hercules-uk.com

This attractive 2.1 system features a small subwoofer paired with a fairly large pair of swivelling, two-driver satellites. Like the TDK, the sub has just a single input for connection

to your soundcard's front speaker output, and two RCA connectors that connect to your satellites. These cables are fairly short, and given the small size of the sub as well, I found

the set-up worked best when all were on the desktop. In this configuration, the sub and sats are fairly well matched, though in common with most of the small speaker sets we looked at, the sub's driver is too small to flap your trousers.

The satellite speakers have two drive units in each, with the upper and lower halves twisting from side to side. Quite what effect this is supposed to have I'm not sure. There's also a '3D' setting which applies a simple stereo enhancement circuit, and separate treble and bass tone controls. It's pretty easy to tweak the sound to suit different sources, whether music or games.

At £40, the 210s represent good value for money. They may not look as attractive or feature flat panel technology like the TDK S80, but at half the price you definitely get well over half the performance.

PCZVERDICT

79%



DESKTOP THEATRE 5.1 DTT2200

★ Creative Labs • £99.99 inc VAT •
www.europe.creative.com

Creative Labs' long association with Cambridge Soundworks, masters of small-volume speaker systems, began to pay dividends with the Desktop Theatre range of speaker systems designed for PC-based DVD.

The DTT2200 is designed for use with any six-channel (5.1) soundcard, such as Creative's own Live 5.1 or Audigy, VideoLogic Sonic Fury, Hercules Game Theater or Philips Edge series. The line level audio outputs from the soundcard (usually three stereo mini-jacks carrying front, rear and centre/sub signals) are connected to three similar stereo inputs

on the subwoofer, which then distributes the five amplified channels (centre, front L/R and surround L/R) to the ugly mini-satellite

speakers. The on/off switch, volume and front/rear fade control is on a cord-mounted remote, which is handy – too many units have controls on floor-mounted subs.



The satellites (rated at 5W RMS) sound rather boxy, with lots of upper-mid but rather weak high frequencies. The odd, side-ported subwoofer (17W RMS) is actually very effective and sounds well matched with the satellites. The intro to *The Sixth Day* has good dynamics, impressive for such a compact and cheap set of speakers: they can pump out quite a volume. However, this is not the world's most attractive set of speakers, and Creative itself provides

the closest competitors to the DTT2200: the newer Inspire 5300!

PCZVERDICT

76%

INSPIRE 5.1 5300

★ Creative Labs • £109.99 • www.Europe.creative.com

Creative has worked on the general look of its products with the more recent Inspire range, and they're considerably less boxy and ugly than the Desktop Theatre range. In terms of its sound, it's a marginal improvement on that of the DTT2200, though the six Watt satellites are still

pretty boxy. The subwoofer (rated 18W RMS), with a front firing driver and side-port, sounds a little more rounded than that of the DTT2200. Even so, the mid-range cone in my Videologic Sirocco Pro satellite speaker is the same size as the subwoofer in the 5300!

The general looks of the system are a vast improvement, with the satellites tastefully badged in silver with the Creative logo and nice removable curved grilles – incidentally, available in colours other than black as well. The subwoofer has roughly the same volume as the DTT2200, but is squarer and won't look out of place peeking around the corner of an armchair, let alone underneath your desk.

The only question is whether these speakers are worth the £16 or so street price premium over the DTT2200. I guess at the end of the day, it boils down to looks and your own personal listening preference – they're so close.

PCZVERDICT

78%



PC DVD

Home cinema in your office

If you have a decent spec machine (a PIII or Athlon 700 or above) with a DVD-ROM drive and reasonable graphics card, the chances are you can play back DVD adequately from your PC – as you probably know.

However, if you have a 5.1 soundcard (and there are many to choose from) and suitable DVD playback software, such as PowerDVD 3.0 Pro 6, you can actually decode the DVD's full six-channel Dolby Digital soundtrack and send it to the outputs on your soundcard, and thence to your 5.1 speaker set. You need a meaty machine for this, but we had no problem at all with a 1GHz Athlon in a variety of movies outputting six channels through Hercules Game Theater XP.

Bear in mind that the requirements of DVD are different depending on whether you're sitting at your computer or watching from across the lounge. A 4.1 system is fine for watching DVD at your desk, since you can set the software to output a 'phantom' centre channel. This works because you're head is in the stereo sweet spot, hence sounds in both channels really will sound as if they're anchored on the screen. Phantom mode, however, doesn't work well at all when you're watching the TV screen at a distance. In this case, you need to go for the full 5.1 monty, and preferably as meaty a set-up as you can afford.



← HERCULES XPS510

★ Hercules • £69.99 • 020 8665 1881 • www.hercules-uk.com

In many ways, this is reminiscent of the Creative Desktop Theatre DTT2200 – small boxy satellites connected to a rather wooden subwoofer, with six channels connected via three stereo mini-jacks to your soundcard spine. Alternatively, there is a standard G9 mini DIN socket that carries the same six analogue channels, as used by some decoders as an output for multi-channel analogue audio.

The plastic satellites (rated 5W RMS) seem pretty rugged, and sound fairly good too if a little brash. The 20 Watt subwoofer is very sluggish and indistinct, getting louder but woollier when its level is adjusted. However, cable lengths are generous, and the set-up works well considering its low price.



Combined with a cheap 5.1 compatible card (such as the Abit AU-10, with bundled six-channel software DVD player costing around £45), this offers a comparatively cheap route to Dolby Digital movie playback for the light of wallet. Although the DTT2200 gives better results, this represents the same good value for money at a lower cost.

PCZVERDICT

78%

INSPIRE 5.1 5700

★ Creative Labs • £299.99 • www.europe.creative.com

While the DTT2200 and Inspire 5300s are designed to be used in conjunction with software decoding of Dolby Digital (see boxout), the Inspire 5.1 5700 adds its own dedicated decoder box to the equation capable of reproducing Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1, besides Dolby ProLogic. This will accept the digital stream via optical or coaxial S/P-DIF either from a dedicated DVD player or courtesy of a software DVD player streamed from your soundcard's S/P-DIF output.

Though the 5700 uses the same satellite speakers for the front and surround speakers, both the centre and subwoofer are upgraded (21W and 30W RMS rating respectively), and in both cases this seems to make a big difference. The subwoofer has a much larger cone with a longer throw, giving a meaty rumble and far deeper bass all-round. The centre speaker has a larger housing and uprated driver unit, giving better presence to voices in the main dialogue channel.

This set-up is unashamedly aimed at home cinema, whether from PC or DVD, and in either case delivers well. At a street price of under £300, this is the cheapest decoder-equipped home cinema offering with DTS as well as Dolby Digital and as such comes highly recommended.



PCZVERDICT

80%

MULTI-CHANNEL AUDIO

But what the hell does it all mean?

Though strictly speaking this is an over-simplification, the X.X descriptive term for speaker systems refers to the number of satellite speakers and subwoofers a particular set-up has. In the case of soundcards, it describes the outputs in the same way, though bear in mind that no soundcard is designed to have a dedicated subwoofer output unless it's a 5.1 card for DVD soundtracks. In other cases, the soundcard will send full-range signals to the speaker sets' amplifier, which will itself split out the low frequencies and send them to the subwoofer itself. In this way, a 4.0 soundcard is usually played back on a 4.1 speaker set-up.

Here are a number of common speaker arrangements explained

2.0 Plain stereo with two full range speakers, like a traditional hi-fi

2.1 Stereo satellites with a subwoofer, still a basic stereo configuration

4.1 Quad sound designed for use with a 4.0 soundcard, though most 5.1 soundcards can be switched to work in 4.0 mode for use with a 4.1 speaker set. Can play 5.1 movies in 'Phantom'

mode if there is a dedicated subwoofer input channel as on the Sirocco Crossfire.

5.1 This is a special case where the subwoofer channel usually has its own input rather than being split automatically from the other 'satellite' channels as it is with 4.1. Designed to be used with a full 5.1 soundcard.

PROMEDIA 4.1

★ Klipsch • £299.99 • 0031 314 383 699 • www.klipsch.com

Klipsch has been making hi-fidelity speakers for the US market for many years, and still has an enviable reputation for quality at keen prices. The company first turned its eyes upon the 'multimedia' (i.e. PC) market a while ago, though it's only recently that its products have received proper distribution in the UK.

The ProMedia 4.1 system features four heavy, high-quality satellites married to a large, powerful and controlled sub-woofer. Unusually for products in this arena, the speakers all have Lucasfilm THX approval – usually reserved for high-end home cinema equipment. While this shouldn't be taken as the be-all and end-all for a system (particularly one used not just for home cinema), it's an indication of just how good this system is.

As a 4.1 system, it's targeted squarely at the high-end gamer,

PCZONE
BEST
BUY

for use with a 5.1 or 4.0 soundcard – it takes two stereo inputs for front and rear and distributes it between the four satellites, sending lower frequencies to the subwoofer automatically.

We tested the system using a variety of games with excellent in-game 3D audio – the sound proved so realistic in *Black Thorn*, my girlfriend thought someone was popping an 0.45cal UMP SMG off in the lounge. Placement of the

rear speakers proved crucial – too far away in a large lounge and it's difficult to get the balance when you're close to the front pair – but overall the results with this system are fabulous. We found the speakers comparatively musical, more forgiving than the cheaper Sirocco Crossfires, which seem to be rather flatter in response, and the satellites certainly sound stronger across a wide range of frequencies. But then there is close on 100 quid between the two in street price – somewhat annoying given they're a lot cheaper in the US than the UK.



PCZVERDICT

83%

SIROCCO CROSSFIRE

★ Videologic • £249 • 01923 277 488 • www.videologic.com

The Crossfires have been undisputed rulers of ZONE's 4.1 firmament for surround gamers for over three years now, and it's only the arrival of a more expensive competitor that has toppled them from the top of the pile – and only just, mainly thanks to a more forgiving all-round sound.

The Crossfires are still clearly fabulous value for money for all the same reasons as they always were: loud, crisp, clear, with superb clarity, essential for precise 3D audio positioning. The subwoofer really handles the low frequencies with grunt but without the flabbiness that its cheaper competitors exhibit, and the lack of distortion even at extremely high volumes is highly impressive. The clarity can get a bit tiring

after a while, especially when listening to music, but for pinpoint-sharp gaming, this is up with the THX-approved Klipsch, and at a slightly cheaper pricepoint.

The Crossfires also have an interesting array of connections, including a dedicated subwoofer line input for connection from an appropriate Dolby Digital decoder unit (provided of course you can set it to output the centre in phantom mode through the front speakers). As well as accepting the four-way input from a suitable soundcard, the Crossfires also have two other switchable stereo inputs, ideal for connection to hi-fi or mini-disc, for example. There's even a Quad mode for outputting stereo through the rear channel as well. All in all, a great product at a typical street price of less than £200.



PCZVERDICT

83%

BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month, and if you're looking for a bit of extra zip, you can get it for a lot less than you might have thought. Memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM buy some now

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ASUS A7V266-E

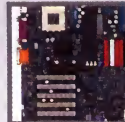
STREET PRICE £159 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Asus

TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.asus.com

After the rather lacklustre performance of VIA's first DDR chipset, the KT266, we are now seeing boards trickle through featuring the much improved KT266A. The Asus A7V266-E will take PC2100 DDR memory running on the ultra-fast 266MHz bus and should represent a hefty performance hike over the previous Best Buy based on the older KT133A chipset. A fast hard drive controller, six USB slots, optional six-channel audio on board and full support for Athlon XP processors rounds up an excellent package from a reliable motherboard manufacturer.

BEST BUDGET



GIGABYTE GA-7ZXR REV 3

STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Gigabyte

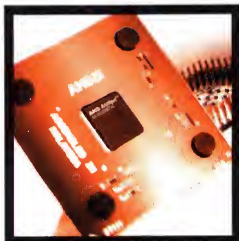
TELEPHONE 01908 362700

WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

The GA-7ZXR is similar to the ABIT KT-7A-RAID, taking Socket A Athlon processors to 1.4GHz and offering support for up to 4 ATA-100 RAID and 4 ATA-100 IDE devices. It even has four-channel audio on board courtesy of the Creative Labs CT5880 PCI chipset.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY



AMD ATHLON XP 1700+

STREET PRICE £149 inc VAT

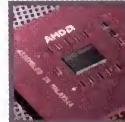
MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1700+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.47GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 1800+ is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1700+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

~~£175~~
£149

BEST BUDGET



DURON 1000

STREET PRICE £69

MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.amd.com

Oops. Gremlins entered the Buyer's Guide last month and we inadvertently stuck the Athlon 1.4GHz processor into the Budget section. Apologies to everyone who tried to buy one for £69, rather than this, the bargain-priced Duron 1000, which is a fantastic processor for gamers on a shoestring.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY



SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £120 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Seagate

TELEPHONE 01628 890 366 **WEBSITE** www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

~~£143~~
£120

BEST BUDGET

NEW ENTRY



SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40Gb

STREET PRICE £78 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Seagate

TELEPHONE 01628 890366

WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – this is great value.

MONITOR

BEST BUY



IYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in

STREET PRICE £628

MANUFACTURER iiyama

TELEPHONE 01438 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old, yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen. The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2048 x 1536.

BEST BUDGET



HANSOL 710P 17in

STREET PRICE £160 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Hansol

TELEPHONE 01252 360400

WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024 x 768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600 x 1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot that'll touch this for the money.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUDGET



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB
STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

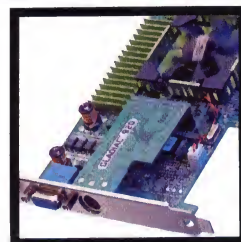
The new Kryo II chipset blows its slower Kryo brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clock speed as opposed to 115MHz. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two.

BEST BUY

ELSA GLADIAC 920
STREET PRICE £286 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE 0800 056 3445

WEBSITE www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

Still Best Buy, but we're looking at a couple of Titanium cards next month, which could change things. The 32-bit colour performance is cool, the FSAA is blinding, and it's got all the nifty DX8 features you could want. We love it and, after being introduced at a ridiculously high RRP, it's now almost affordable. This card also features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think and comes with a full, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.



SOUNDCARD

BEST BUDGET



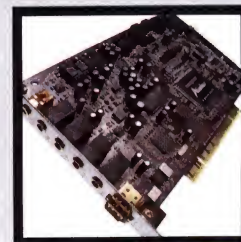
HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II
STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
PHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money and its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!

BEST BUY

CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER
STREET PRICE £82 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.europe.creative.com

The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/dvd sound card. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but well worth it.



SPEAKERS

BEST BUDGET



HERCULES XPS210
STREET PRICE £40 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving a decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue, it looks the part too...

NEW ENTRY

BEST BUY

KLIPSCH PROMEDIA 4.1
STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
TELEPHONE 0031 314 383 699 **WEBSITE** www.klipsch.com

Take your pick for Best Buy between the stunning Klipsch 4.1 THX-approved speakers and the cheaper long-term favourites Sirocco Crossfire from Videologic. Both represent great value for money, but the Klipsch edge it in the listenability stakes, hence their new entry here. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers that can split your ears just as well as the Crossfires. You'll find no better speaker set-up for watching DVDs and playing games on PC.



NEW ENTRY

BEST BUDGET



TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32
STREET PRICE £72 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225235
WEBSITE www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without a hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Shop around and you're laughing...

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A
STREET PRICE £115 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522 **WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Bumproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on...



CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled, even among more pricey competition.

BEST BUY

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2
STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.



JOYSTICKS

ENDZONE

Get the suck out!

★ ENDZONE EDITOR Rhianna Pratchett

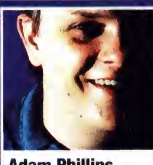


2002 marks not only the start of another year of PC ZONE loveliness, but also the start of my second year

as a member of the ZONE team. It seems like only yesterday that I skipped happily into the ZONE offices, only to emerge a year later a bitter, twisted shell of my former self. It's the oppressive regime you see. Already I have been banned from eating Chupa Chups within a 20-metre radius of Anthony, and I am mercilessly persecuted for being behind the 'temporary' loss of any paperwork - especially missing issues and phone lists, in the ZONE office. But, for when the pressure gets too much, I'm digging a tunnel underneath my desk which I intend to turn into a secret exit, emerging in a pillar box outside my local Costa coffee shop in true Dangermouse style.

But the section must go on, and Keith Pullin switches to lightspeed for Talking Heads on page 136, as he catches up with *Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds* project director Garry Gaber. Tony Lamb is also soaring through the atmosphere with his pick of the best mods and maps for *Tribes 2* on page 142. I'm still taking care of your cheating needs while dreaming of a galaxy far, far away, where a girl is left to suck her lollipops in peace.

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Phil Wand

CHEATMASTER

For all those dirty rotten scoundrels

★ DANGEROUS TO KNOW Rhianna Pratchett

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, all you need to do to solve them is...

WRITE TO Dear Rhianna/Cheat Master, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Dear Rhianna or Cheat Master in the subject line

ALIEN VS PREDATOR 2

Vivendi

While playing, press Enter, type <cheat> then hit the space bar. Type in any of the following codes and press Enter to activate the cheat:

mpsmithy	Full armour
mpkohler	Full ammo
mpcanturme	God mode on/off
mpschuckit	Get weapons and ammo
mpbeamme	Restart level
mpsixthsense	No clip on/off
mpicu	Third-person mode on/off
mptachometer	Display speed info on/off
mpsize	Display size info on/off
mpgrs	Display rotation info on/off
mpgps	Display position info on/off

EMPIRE EARTH

Vivendi

Press Enter while playing to display the console window. Type in the following codes and press Enter to activate:

my name is methos	Gain all resources and reveal map
asus	Drivers reveal map
atm	+1000 gold
rock&roll	+1000 rock
you said wood	+1000 wood
creatine	+1000 iron
headshot	Remove objects from map
the big dig	Lose all resources
boston rent	Lose all gold
uh, smoke?	Lose all wood
somebody set up us the bomb	Win game
ahhhcool	Lose game

GHOST RECON

Ubi Soft

Press Enter on your NUM pad to activate the console screen, then type:

superman	God mode
shadow	Invisibility mode
TeamSuperman	Team god mode
TeamShadow	Team invisibility mode
refill	Refills inventory
ammo	Unlimited ammo
autowin	Win mission
chickenrun	Grenades become chickens

COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Eidos

While in the game type GONZOOPERA to activate the cheats, then type any of the following codes:

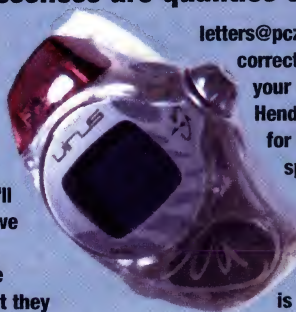
STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard.

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to

letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure you include all your correct details, so if you win we know where to send your special prize. This month's winner is Matthew Hendrey from Hailsham, East Sussex with his cheats for *Asheron's Call*. To get your character's hands to sparkle and make them do the YMCA dance, type in *YMCA*. If that's not your thing, then type in *TEAPOT* and your character does the dance from that lovely little song, 'I'm A Little Teapot'. Matthew wins this virus watch, which is a good thing because we don't know what the hell to do with it!



DEAR WANDY

The Dr Ruth of computer problems

P.122



Ctrl + I Invisibility
Ctrl + L Invulnerability
Shift + X Teleport
Shift + V Trace User
F9 Terrain Info
Ctrl + Shift + N Complete mission
Ctrl + Shift + X Destroy everything

GRAND THEFT AUTO Take 2

Press 'Del' in the character select screen and enter these cheats:

itsgallus All levels and cities
lamthelaw No police

TALKING HEADS

Garry Gaber talks *Star Wars*, strategy and morphing snails

P.136



itcouldbeyou +999,999,999 points
Suckmyrocket All weapons/armour and 'get out of jail free' card
itsantrum Unlimited lives

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LONDON 1969

Take 2

Activate in the same way as for *Grand Theft Auto*:

Flashmotor Level select
6661970 Unlimited lives
tithead No police
averyrichman +999,999,999 points
uainnuffin All items
silence Turn off police radio

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR Electronic Arts

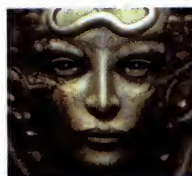
Type these codes while in a game (cheats may not work in v1.01):

.matteosartori Reveal map
.muchkoku Unlimited koku
.conan Remove construction abilities, negative koku

RETROZONE

Dave Woods was just a mere slip of a lad in 1992

P.140



.prototypearmy Unlimited army life
.ifoundsomecu Copper in all provinces

DUNGEON KEEPER 2 Electronic Arts

While playing the game, press **Ctrl + Alt + C** (this makes a noise rather than activating a window). Then type one of the following codes:

now the rain has gone Reveals map
show me the money Gives money
feel the power Upgrades monsters to Level 10



ⓐ A mistress fighting frenzy.

EXTENDED PLAY

Maps and missions for *Tribes 2* and *Shogun*

P.142



fit the best Gives all rooms and traps
this is my church Gives all rooms
i believe its magic Gives all spells
do not fear the reaper Win level
ha ha thisaway ha ha thataway +100,000 mana

Temple sacrifices

SACRIFICE	TO GET
2 wizards	1 bile demon
1 skeleton + 1 troll	1 bile demon
2 warlocks	1 goblin
2 black knights	1 vampire
1 salamander + 1 dark elf	1 dark mistress
2 salamanders	1 dark mistress
2 skeletons	1 dark elf
2 bile demons	1 rogue
2 dark elves	1 Troll
2 rogues	1 salamander
2 vampires	1 bile demon
2 dark mistresses	1 skeleton
3 monks	Mana boost
2 dwarves = 1 dk mistress	Make safe
2 trolls	1 warlock

DEAR RHIANNA

Rhianna Pratchett bandages your gaming wounds

HACKED OFF

Q I'm pulling my hair out over *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*. I have encountered a huge rock monster in the tomb level of the knight campaign, but I am perplexed as to how to dispel this giant. I have a feeling the pit of spikes has something to do with it but I just don't know where it all fits in. Please help me before I go bald.

ANTSHODAN

A This sounds like it's a stone golem, and the best way to deal with these guys is to use a blunt weapon and combos that use a red trail. You need to keep circle-strafting as much as possible (because they can throw boulders), and if there are gratings that you can get behind in the room, try and use them if you can. There's a good reason for this – you can hit him from behind them but he can't get to you.

BARKING MAD

Q Is there any other way of getting past Elizabeth in *Clive Barker's Undying*? I have tried fighting her which seems to be pointless, and pressing TAB to enter the cheat codes doesn't work. This is ruining an otherwise very good game.

Joneill100

A The best way to deal with Elizabeth is to stay back and bide your time.

Use 'Invoke' on her skeletons and then use any weapon on her to take her down. If you're using the scythe then keep ducking in and out, and try and avoid her melee attacks and missiles. When she starts glowing and things get a bit *Exorcist* nip in there and lop off her head.

RAIDER RAGE

Q I hope that you can help me. I am playing *Tomb Raider – The Last Revelation* and am still quite near the beginning. The problem is that I come into this room with all these strange markings on the floor. Below the room is another room filled with water. There is a rope that I pull which lets the guide into the room below, who then sets fire to the water. I can't seem to get any further. In the top room, there is a gate at the end with a treasure or something behind it, but I can't get to it.

Chris

A Think Indiana Jones on this one and walk onto the first glowing tile. Then jump onto each subsequent one without touching any of the others. For each right move the torches on the wall will light up, and when the last one lights, the gate will open and you can pick up the timeless sands, which in turn activates another gate.

GANGSTER'S PARADISE

Q I need help on *Gangsters 2*. I'm on the level where you have to save the Mayor's brother. I've tried about ten different things, but none of them are right. I would be really happy if you could help me on this one.

David Roberts

A Make sure you have a full team for this one, ideally Hayes and Caswell, and a few heavies. Leave one of your gang guarding the route to your hide-out and make sure you change the aggression of the gangsters heading to the hide-out to 'evasive' so they don't engage in fights en route. If you get challenged in any way, don't return fire. Go straight for the hide-out rather than trying to hit the Kitson's patrol. Use Haynes to kidnap Fairbanks and get back to your own territory and heal any wounded gang members. Then it's up to

you to start taking over Kitson's territory. Do this a building at a time but make sure you guard the bridge on Fullerton Road. Then it's up to you whether you just fend off Kitson's attacks or go in for the kill. The end result is the same.

PAYNEFUL

Q I am completely stuck on *Max Payne* (Part Three, 'Cold Day In Hell', Chapter Four 'Put out my flames with gasoline'). I can see that I have to run through the bar and kitchen which explode, but I never actually survive. I am extremely impressed with the game, and don't want to resort to using the 'God' cheats. I'd really appreciate a few tips here.

Anthony Smith

A Here are a few tips that should help you get through this part of the game. This level will probably need a few run-throughs just so you can work out your timings, as each room has its own sequence of explosions and falling debris. Watch for where the explosions are coming from and then try to keep to the part of the room where the flames are minimal (which will vary from room to room). This will probably involve a lot of wall-hugging and quicksaving in between rooms. The important thing is to just keep moving.



Max Payne: it's short but not easy

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to complaints. Let us ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

★ MAN ON A MISSION Adam Phillips



LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

We're here to help. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading Watchdog

A2*!?!?

Q I am writing about the very poor service I received at A2Z Computer Products in Loughborough, Leicestershire. On August 22, I bought an AMD 1.3 Thunderbird processor, as I have upgraded my gigabyte motherboard to take up to a 1.4.

When I got home and replaced my old processor (a Duron 750) with the new 1.3, I found it wouldn't work.

So the following day, I took the processor back to A2Z and

asked if they could replace it or refund me. After talking to the salesperson for an hour the managing director came over. I was amazed that he didn't know a thing about processors. He said they couldn't replace the processor as I had broken a leg off the corner of the chip.

I was shocked and told them that was how I received the processor. If it had broken in my machine, I wouldn't be able to get my old one back in to run it...

They still insisted they wouldn't replace it and said 'no

refund' as well so I am now £134.66 out of pocket and am furious with A2Z.

Glen Jefferies

A It sounds like a tough break. Quite literally. And more than 130 sheets is certainly no laughing matter. We asked A2Z for its side of the story. Alex Rose, head of customer services, told us the following: "The order in question was 87337 (1x AMD 1.3 Thunderbird 200FSB). I have thoroughly investigated this matter and

am in total confidence that the company acted in a proper way."

He continued: "The customer returned the item to us with two physical defects. One was a missing pin from the corner of the CPU, the other was the malformation of many other pins in the same area."

He says you reported to A2Z that you had successfully inserted the CPU into the board 'many times' but that the state of the CPU when

ONLINE GAMING DOA?

Blueyonder/Telewest are making bold claims about their online gaming service. But are they delivering?

COMPLAINT #1

Q I am writing about Telewest's "high-speed" service (Blueyonder) – or to be more precise, its lack of one. The service is so variable that it's almost beyond belief. Even when there aren't connectivity problems, the performance is patchy. Here's an example: some days, I get download speeds of 60Kbs – this translates as a brilliant download speed for getting hold of (increasingly) large game demos or movies.

On other days, though, the speed (even on the same site that was previously providing 60Kbs) drops down to 20Kbs – and even as low as 5Kbs on one recent occasion. The speed of the download seems to bear little relation to what site it is – if the cable modem decides it is going to work that day then everything goes right, though how long it actually lasts is another question altogether... but when it goes wrong, it goes very wrong.

It was all looking so good as well – when it was first fitted, using the service was a joy with *Counter-Strike* servers showing pings as low as 30 on Wireplay. But now 150 is more common and with Wireplay gone, I have to resort to US and European servers most of the time where my ping is often over 200. I know Blueyonder has now taken over Wireplay and at some mystical point in the future, will be restoring its service but for now I'm unable to get its temporary servers working.

As for web pages, it seems a mystery which pages will open quickly and which ones will take as long as they did on 56K bandwidth (or even longer). Unlike the downloads, which have sometimes worked well over the past month, at least web pages have been consistently bad.

Another thing that manages to go wrong is the connection to Westwood Online to play *Red Alert 2* – after a game finishes the connection is lost. What makes me fairly sure that this

is not Westwood's but Telewest's fault is that when the connection dies and I quit the game, the rest of the Internet service has gone as well. I have to reboot the PC to play again.

What compounds these problems is the disgraceful service you receive when trying to fix any connection issues. The only way to report a slow service is by running a ping test and filling in the details on their form. Unfortunately, despite the form's suggestion to add details about your problem, if the information in the form goes over 60 lines then it loses the whole thing.

There is no e-mail address to contact technical support on, only an automated reply system, and ringing the helpline only allows you to register the fact that you seem to be having a problem – they can do nothing to help you fix it except give out proxy server addresses.

The whole process seems designed simply to frustrate – at least on my old reliable 56K you could swap service providers if you had a problem but since

Telewest and NTL seem to be the same company even that option isn't available now.

Saul Herman

COMPLAINT #2

Q Telewest's new broadband Internet is a nightmare of disconnections. My system was installed on September 12. All was fine until the engineer left. Then during the first night I was disconnected and connected more times than I can recall. So I called the free helpline – two hours later someone answered. Meanwhile, my modem had reconnected itself and was working.

The guy at the end of the phone said all seemed OK and thanked me for calling. The next day the same thing happened so I called again and this time bought a packed-lunch for the wait. One and a half hours later, the tech said an engineer would call to renew the modem on September 17. The 17th came and no engineer turned up so I rang the helpdesk again. They said that the engineer's van had broken down – fair enough – and they rebooked him for the September 19.

The 19th came and so did the engineer but he was a cable guy and wouldn't enter the house so he went away. I rang Telewest

again (one hour waiting this time) and the tech asked if my modem was working now and it was. He said it seemed OK at the present so he said he would log my call as a successful fix. But I am still getting problems and am still waiting for a fix to my "Blue-yawn-der Nearly-Always-On Internet service."

A. Reader

A Two complainers. And an interesting development. Before that though, here is what Chad Raube, head of Internet Services at Telewest had to say when we presented him with the complaints: "Thank you for bringing to my attention the fact that two of our Blueyonder broadband customers have experienced less than satisfactory service, both in terms of their Internet access, and the technical support we provide. We will contact these customers again to ensure we have responded to their issues."

Chad continues: "Consistency of network speed has not always been to our usual high standards over the past month, due to a number of issues. Like many ISPs, we have experienced the effects of viruses and other external factors, as



blueyonder
broadband internet

High-speed or just plain old high-maintenance?

returned to them would have prevented the CPU from being inserted into the board at all. He claims: "The physical damage to the legs of the CPU was obviously a result of the mistreatment of it by the customer. Otherwise how could he explain the bent pins and his statement that he successfully inserted it?"

Rose goes on to say that Alex Kazami (managing director) happened to be in the vicinity of the trade desk and spoke at length to you during which you were informed that they would not be able to replace or refund you for the CPU.

"We pride ourselves on excellent customer service and we hold the ISO 9002 accreditation for our continued commitment to this area," says Rose. "But we cannot be held responsible for damage to goods after they have left the premises. Surely we acted in the

same way that any responsible business would have?"

So A2Z Computer Products are clearly adamant that you were responsible for the damage. Glen, let us know if you want to take this any further. If you do, it may well require a trip to court, though. Which can often be quite a costly business.

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means we can resolve your problems much quicker.

well as some of our own isolated network issues."

He adds they will continue to work in these areas to maintain "the excellent performance our customers have come to expect and we have recently published a detailed technical update on our Blueyonder status page."

Chad says he apologises for the long waits some customers have experienced when calling: "Our support number is free, but we are aware that the wait has sometimes been unacceptably long, particularly during busy periods."

Telewest says that since August it has trained and put in place an additional 96 technical support staff and that it is committed to improving the service offered even further. It has recently informed customers, via newsgroups, "of a whole programme of improvements we are carrying out."

Chad rounds off by telling us that "overall customer feedback continues to be positive and Telewest remains committed to providing a fantastic online gaming experience, and excellent all-round service and value to our broadband customers."

We also received a follow-up e-mail from Saul stating his

problems have now (on the whole) been rectified: "When I wrote to *PC ZONE* [initially], it was only the temporary servers that were operating – not the current web page interface to launch games. In fact, the new gaming service is superb."

And it gets even better. "The pings are regularly as low as 30 for individual users and I've played games where both *Counter-Strike* sides have an average latency of around 50!" enthuses Saul. "This is much better than Wireplay ever was and, with the web page interface to launch games and book servers, it's easy to use. The range of games is steadily improving but [the service] is already a first-person shooter fan's dream come true and is equivalent to playing on a LAN."

This is all great news and if this is how Telewest reacts to customer (and press) feedback then more power (and subscriptions) to them. We want nothing more than to have a broadband service that our readers know they can rely on for all their online gaming needs. If Telewest is the one to provide such a service in the long term, then Watchdog is more than happy never to have to write about them again.



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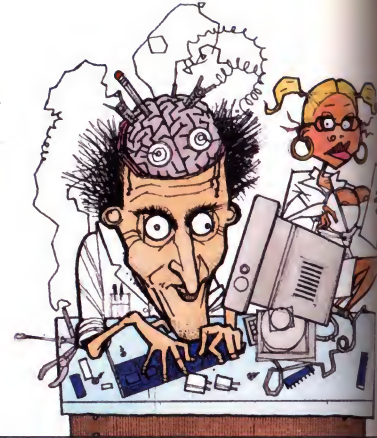
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★ CHIP MONK Phil Wand



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EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading Dear Wandy

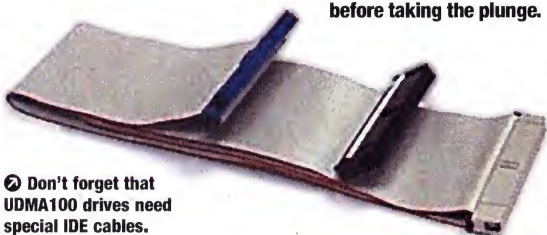
Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

ATHLONATION: PART 1

Q I'm thinking about upgrading my motherboard and processor. Would I need to create a new partition for my hard drive on this new board, and would this mean losing all my current files? Could I simply install the drive as it is without having to change anything? Also, which would be better – an Athlon or a P4?

Sean

A You could just change the board and try your luck, although from experience this is a sure-fire route to endless grief. Old chipset drivers on new motherboards are like leaded petrol in an unleaded engine. As I've said many times before, Windows is a simply terrible housekeeper and a fresh install always makes for a happier machine – even if you haven't actually changed anything. Because new mobos support UDMA100 drives, it would be daft for you to retard your nice new system with an antique hard drive when £70 gets you 20Gb of UDMA100 space. The best move would be to install your chosen flavour of Windows onto the new drive, and then install your old drive on the other IDE bus along with your CD-ROM. That way, you can still get at all your old files and delete the ones you no longer need, thus freeing additional storage. When it comes down to CPU, we've been recommending the Athlon (for about £230 you can get a 1.2GHz Athlon Thunderbird, Abit KT7A motherboard and a chunky heatsink fan unit) for the past year, but next issue we're putting the P4 and Athlon up in a head-to-head. It might be worth holding on for this before taking the plunge.



Don't forget that UDMA100 drives need special IDE cables.



Bonkers card at a bargain price: the Videologic Vivid!XS

ATHLONATION: PART 2

Q I own a Tiny PIII 600 with on-board graphics (a bit of a con: I had to buy a Voodoo3 3000 PCI to get any decent performance out of it) and soundcard. Now I want to upgrade without spending an arm and a leg. I know I have to get a new motherboard, soundcard and graphics card, but I don't know which ones or whether I'll need new RAM. I have a good hard drive and DVD drive

“What can the likes of me do to compete with the sub-100 pings of you urban folk?”

LEE SKELTON CAN'T GET BROADBAND DAMMIT

but I'm not sure about power and heatsinks. Would it be worth it just to convert to AMD with the current set-up that I have?

Turrone

A You don't mention how much memory you have, but odds are it's going to be a PC100. So you'll need to get a CPU and motherboard with 100MHz FSB. The AMD Thunderbird is perfect for this, providing more shove for your money than any other chip. Just make sure you get the 200MHz and not the new 266MHz version or you won't get it up to speed – this means you'll have to opt for the older boards that use standard memory and not DDR. As mentioned elsewhere, £230 puts a 1.2GHz games monster within easy reach, with an

additional £60 spent on our favourite budget Kryo II card, the VideoLogic Vivid!XS. That said, we have a 1.2GHz Tbird machine here with a totally old Voodoo3, and it heaves Team Fortress Classic around the screen with hydraulic smoothness at 1024 x 768. Remember that your PSU will need gumption to run a Thunderbird – a 300W supply is recommended, as odd behaviour can occur if you try to use it on smaller, lower quality, units.

ATHLONATION: PART 3

Q I'm thinking of building a new Athlon 1.4GHz PC. I've chosen all the parts, but I don't know how well they will work together. First of all, the motherboard is an I-Will KA266R Raid Socket A, and the processor I am hoping to use will be the AMD Athlon 1.4GHz. Is this a good combination, or should I pay a bit more and go for the ASUS A7M266 (I'd like it to support

buying into DDR might be a good idea, although it doesn't necessarily produce noticeable performance advantages – you only have to look at the way the Pentium P4 with its 400MHz DDR memory loses out to a regular Tbird in benchmarks to see what I mean.

SOD MY BSOD

Q I'm 14 and have a limited source of money, so please bear that in mind. I own a Compaq Presario, AMD Athlon 900MHz, with 64Mb RAM and a 20Gb hard drive. I got this last Christmas. All has been fine, but recently my computer has been freezing when I'm playing games – sometimes when I'm connected to the Internet. Every now and again, I get the blue screen of death and it's annoying having to shut down improperly – I'm worried that I might be harming my computer. Is there any way that I can stop this problem?

Richard Magilton

A If your machine has only suddenly started to play up, it sounds like something has either come loose or is overheating. First thing to check is that there's a warm draught blowing from the back of the power supply. If not, you'll need to buy a new PSU or replace the fan. Is the machine making more noise (because the death throes of a fan can be quite alarming)? It may be possible to get some extra life out of the thing by pulling the sticker off and trickling some light oil on the bearing, but that's only a temporary measure. If you do repair or replace the fan, ensure you get someone experienced to do it as even when unplugged, your PSU can still give you a shock. To check the rest you'll need to remove the lid. Again, if you are at all unsure, find someone that knows what they are doing. Re-seat (ie unplug and plug back in) the power cable to the motherboard. Do the same with the memory sticks and hard drive leads. Now check the CPU fan spins freely when you tap it

Reece

A The I-Will does indeed have on-board sound, which is actually pretty good. That said, it's not quite a Sound Blaster Live!, and so a quick move of a link on the board will switch it off. I can tell you that I have a 1.3GHz Tbird on exactly that board running a Sound Blaster Live! and I've never had any problems. Actually, no, that's a lie: I can't get any sound effects when playing Total Annihilation. The motherboard, however, is pure joy if you like to push your CPU beyond its intended specification, but the choice is really down to you. If you can afford the extra money, then

with your finger. Blow any dust out of the heatsink too. A blue screen wedging your machine solid won't damage the hardware but you may lose files so it's definitely a problem you should investigate.

BACKWOODS GAMER

Q As an avid online gamer and resident of rural England (the Lake District) I feel I am being left behind. I have no broadband possibilities, no cable, and no ADSL. So what can the likes of me do to compete with the sub-100 pings of you urban folk? Surely there must be some solution out there? Some say satellite, but I hear there is a bad delay which makes gaming impossible. Some say ISDN, but is there an ISDN supplier out there who offers a 24/7 service for a fixed monthly rate? Please help – it's a problem that seems likely to only get worse.

Lee Skelton

A Don't worry, it's not just you. My home is 25 minutes from central London by train and not far from the M25. Can I get ADSL or cable? I can't even get BT to test my line properly. Satellite set-ups aren't great for gaming although they are wonderful for cutting download times. Your only real choice if you live out the back of beyond is ISDN. As deals offered by ISPs change seemingly every day, I'd recommend a visit to old favourite www.net4nowt.co.uk and have a look to see what suits you.

AREAL CARD

Q I currently have an AMD Athlon 1.4GHz processor and Elite motherboard with 256MB DDR memory. Can you tell me what the best graphics card would be to use with this set-up? At the moment I have an ageing Voodoo3 but it's PCI and gives a poor benchmark on 3DMark 2001.

Anon

A If you want to future proof your purchase, then a

GeForce3 is the only way to go – but it's on the pricey side. It's also no faster than a GeForce2 when powering games like *Half-Life* and *Unreal*, as old games don't take advantage of the new card's mystical powers – only the very latest titles will make you feel like you've got your money's worth. My advice would be to stick with the 3dfx old-timer and shop around for a new card some time after Christmas. If Santa was generous, go for the Elsa Gladiac 920 – currently at £290 it's not exactly cheap, but it'll knock your socks off.

STICKY DOORS

Q I've recently installed the patch for *Half-Life*. Having only just bought the title, I decided to show off my elite skills on the *Team Fortress Classic* servers. I selected my team and class and got down to some hard-knuckle killing. When I went back to restock on health and ammo, I found myself trapped by the doors. This problem gets increasingly annoying when you find yourself dying because of odd door behaviour and not other players. Is this the server, my computer, or are those people at Sierra just too damn lazy to do anything about it?

Simon Haley

A This is a surprisingly common question. The problem is nothing to do with your set-up, and is entirely to do with the *Half-Life* server code. As you'll have noticed, our *Team Fortress* servers run non-stop maps – the trouble comes when they've been running a good few hours and the scores are heading for the stratosphere. That's when you find yourself magically glued to lifts, or stuck in doorways. The only cure is to restart the server – something that is done periodically by administrators. If you're quick with your fingers, though you can free yourself: hold down your forward key, then alternate very rapidly between crouch and jump. Hey presto, freedom. ☺



Some players are so fat they break doors. Actually, that's a lie.

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ON THE CD

DISCS Matt Cheshire WORDS Rhianna Pratchett

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BEFORE YOU DIAL... IF YOU ARE CALLING THE HELPLINE, PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS

• If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
• If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – i.e. system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
• Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

• You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs
• Many of the programs on our cover CDs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
• Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only

DISCLAIMER

• This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
• Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.



Perfect for the short-sighted shooter fan.

Stocking-fillers galore this month, with a whopping 21 demos to keep you gaming through Christmas and into 2002. Enjoy!



DEMOS

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

Ubi Soft • Disc 2

Ghost Recon is a superb squad-based shooter in the vein of *Hidden & Dangerous*. This demo comes with an exclusive mission (not available in the full game) and multiplayer support, as well as fleshing out the back-story to the full game.

CONTROLS

Movement	W/S/A/D
Run	Mouse button 2
Fire mouse	Button 1
Change magazine	Z
Drop/Raise stance	X/C
Peek left/right	Q/E
Weapon zoom in/out	R/T
Perform action	Space
Shuffle	Left alt



So you want to be a soldier?

EXCLUSIVE

RED FACTION MULTIPLAYER

THQ • Disc 2

Not brilliant in single-player, but well worth a shot with others, this multiplayer demo demonstrates the game's Deathmatch and Capture The Flag modes, with two 16-player DM maps and two CTF maps. Remember that in multiplayer the GeoMod technology really comes into its own, and destroying the scenery to your tactical advantage is a must.

CONTROLS

Forwards	W
Backwards	S
Left	A
Right	D
Jump	Space
Crouch	C
Primary fire	Left mouse button
Secondary fire	Right mouse button
Force reload	R
Switch weapon	1-4/Mouse wheel
Use	Enter



Recreate Barthez in Blunderland.

FIFA 2002

EA Sport • Disc 2

We were more than a little disappointed with the latest *FIFA* game. It looks great (as always) and has all the latest teams, but the so-called 'innovative' passing system isn't up to scratch. Judge for yourself with a classic Man United vs Arsenal match.

CONTROLS

Movement	Arrow keys	Trigger run/Goalie charge	Q
Skill moves	E	Lob/Slide tackle	A
Sprint	W	Add ballspin left/right	Z/C
1-2 pass	Space	Pass/Switch player	S
		Shoot/Conservative tackle	D





If you're not a fan of RTS...

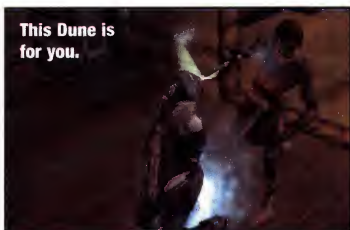
FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

Cryo • Disc 1

EXCLUSIVE

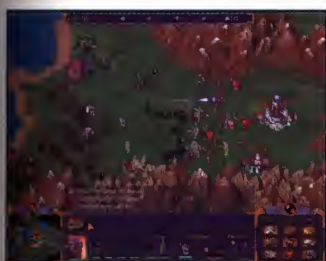
The battle for Dune just keeps on raging and this exclusive demo lets you slip into the shoes of Paul Atreides, heir to House Atreides, for one mission. Take part in the battle to bring down the evil House Harkonnen and take control of Dune. You can also check out our review on page 76.

This Dune is for you.



CONTROLS

Movement	Arrow keys
Aim	Right mouse button (held down)
Shoot/neutralise/voice	Left mouse button
Cycle weapons	Mouse button 3/Ctrl
Action	Enter
Drink water	Backspace
Current objectives	F1



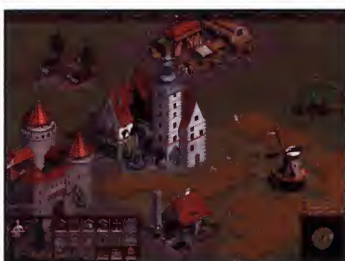
KOHAN: AHRIMAN'S GIFT

Strategy First • Disc 2

The standalone prequel to *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns* sees you wrestling with the demands of becoming one of the ancient race of Kohans. Play through a basic tutorial, single-player and multiplayer maps as well as new factions and races.

CONTROLS

Keyboard



COSSACKS: THE ART OF WAR

CDV • Disc 1

Cossacks: The Art Of War boasts new units, ships, nations, campaigns and missions, as well as improved controls and AI in this expansion pack to the popular historical RTS. The demo gives you an opportunity to try out a few of them in a single- or multiplayer game.

CONTROLS

Mouse



ZOO TYCOON

Microsoft • Disc 2

Fancy yourself as a bit of a Gerald Durrell? Build your own zoo and see if you can look after the gazelles, giraffes and Bengal tigers better than the school hamster you borrowed for the summer when you were six.

CONTROLS

Keyboard



PLAYASMANAGER 2

Anco • Disc 1

Champ Man has yet to go online, so here's your chance to prove your managerial prowess the world over. This is the full client software, though you pay £5 or £10 per month (depending on which division you play in).

CONTROLS

Keyboard



NEW



BORN FREE

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SOUL REAVER 2

Eidos • Disc 1

This excellent action/adventure takes all the elements we enjoyed from the first *Soul Reaver* and expands them in every direction, the compelling plot and elegantly designed puzzles proving particularly satisfying. Guide the tormented Raziel through the first section of the game in this top demo.

CONTROLS

Movement	Arrow keys
Devour Soul	D
Heavy Attack	C
Use/light attack	X
Autoface	Ctrl
Crouch	X
Jump	Space



ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN

Ubi Soft • Disc 2

Black Thorn sees the *Rogue Spear* team back on form again. This demo includes one new map, multiplayer support (including the new Lone Wolf mode) and suppressed and unsuppressed versions of the P90 gun.

CONTROLS

Movement	W/S/A/D
Fire	Mouse button 1
Run	Mouse button 2
Crouch	C
Peek left/right	Q/E



BALLISTICS

Xicat Interactive • Disc 2

So you thought *WipeOut* was fast? Well welcome to the fastest game to ever

grace the PC. Set in a futuristic world, *Ballistics* has a pure racing dynamic, with a simple control system and unparalleled sense of speed.

CONTROLS

Accelerate	Left mouse button
Detach from wall	Right mouse button
Manual Cooling	S
Roll left/right	D/F
Boost	Space



AQUANOX

Fishtank Interactive • Disc 1

Aquanox is set 600 years in the future when everyone has emigrated to the bottom of the sea as a result of a massive surface war. This demo gives you the chance to play through one of the game's early missions – which is great, as you get to search for all the weird-looking things you've just seen in *The Blue Planet*.

CONTROLS

Movement	W/A/S/D
Strafe	Up/down r/f
Primary fire	Mouse button one
Secondary fire	Mouse button two
Cycle weapons	C/X
Switch off engine	S (twice)
Switch on engine	W (twice)
Booster	W (twice)



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE GOLD

Phantagram • Disc 1

The Gold Edition to the fantasy-style RTS includes new heroes and missions, and has a more complete 'feel' compared to the original game. More importantly, it lets you save anytime. This demo includes two missions and a tutorial.

CONTROLS



NHL 2002

EA • Disc 2

Great presentation with almost photo-realistic graphics, this frantic game may not be a whole lot different from *NHL 2001*, but it's still the best hockey game around.

CONTROLS

With puck	
Pass/Face off	C
Shoot	Space
Speed burst	X
Deke	Z
Without puck	
Change player	C
Hook/Hold/Block shot	Space
Speed burst/Body check	X
Big hit	Z



RALLY TROPHY

JoWood Productions • Disc 2

Take a Mini Cooper S for a time trial and pretend you're in *The Italian Job* in this realistically detailed rally driving sim. Just watch out for your extremely sarcastic navigator.

CONTROLS

Movement	Arrow keys
Handbrake	Space
Mirror	M
Shift up/Shift down	A/Z
Reverse	Ctrl
Reset	R



NEW YORK RACE

Wanadoo • Disc 2

Something of an unorthodox take on the racing game, as you get to pilot your hover-vehicle through a futuristic New York cityscape. Reminiscent of *The Fifth Element*, the urban scenery is the ultimate in eye candy though the controls do take a bit of getting used to.

CONTROLS

Accelerate	S
Brake	X
Go up	Down arrow
Go down	Up arrow
Strafe left/right	Q/O
Strafe up/down	Z/W

MODWATCH CD2

ThreeWave CTF for *Quake III Arena*

The HPB Bot

THE DUGOUT ZONE CD2

in association with www.thedugout.net

All the latest hints and tips for the very latest version of our favourite footie management game, *Championship Manager 01/02*.

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb brings you the best maps around for *Tribes 2* and *Shogun: Total War*.



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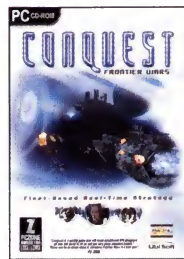
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BATTLE REALMS



COMANCHE 4



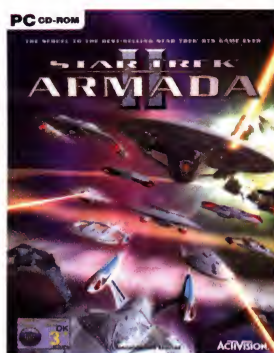
GHOST RECON



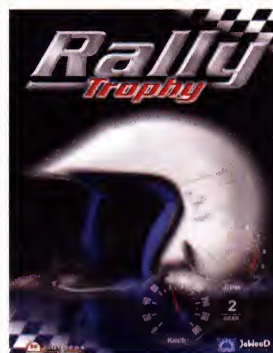
IL 2



POOL OF RADIANCE



STAR TREK: ARMADA II



RALLY TROPHY



WORLD WAR III
Black Gold

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin

megastores



PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all PC gamers. The following games are the best 100 games money can buy, split into genres to make your purchases even easier

Have you got money burning a hole in your pocket? If so, make a cheque or postal order payable to PC ZONE and we'll forget about writing the mag and get ourselves down the pub for a good drink-up. If you're not feeling altruistic then perhaps you might want to buy yourself a game, but which one? How can you sort the *Unreal Tournaments* from the *Daikatanas*?

Relax, this is where the PC ZONE Top 100 comes in handy.

Every game listed here is worth buying. If you're a fan of a certain

genre you can head straight for your favourite games, which are ranked in order of brilliance. Some of the games might be a bit long in the tooth but that shouldn't put you off. Most of the old-timers have been re-released on budget and you'll be able to find the rest pretty cheap if you shop around.

The rules are simple. Each month we review a load of games. If any of them are good enough to enter the Top 100 they take their rightful place and the bottom one in that particular genre is consigned to the dustbin

never to return again.

As games are always improving, we re-evaluate all the titles in a genre every time there is a new entry.

Each month we'll also show you the games we think are the Top 10 of all time. This month our reviews editor gets the chance to talk about all the games that he plays when he should be writing stuff for the mag.



WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

If a game gets a Classic rating (90 per cent or above) in PC ZONE you know it's going to be pretty spectacular. Unlike other organs, we don't shower Classics around like confetti at a royal wedding and you won't find one in every single issue. In fact, of all the games released this year, only four have

been deemed worthy of our gold award, and that includes *Max Payne*, which won't even enter the Top 100 until next month.

Classics have to have something a bit different. They have to take the genre to new heights or impress with originality. For this reason you should also pay special attention

to the games that receive our Award Of Excellence (80-89 per cent). When we say excellent, we mean excellent, and if you're a fan of the genre these games fall into you won't be disappointed. Put your faith in us and we won't let you down, and that's a promise.

Z
PCZONE
CLASSIC

SHOOTERS**HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #71 • 93%**

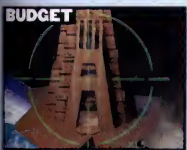
★ *Half-Life* redefined its genre and stood unchallenged as the greatest shooter of all time for exactly three years. It has a cracking atmosphere, a compelling plot and some of the best AI ever coded. Better still, it's now bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*. All in all, this is still the best FPS package out there.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2****PCZ #110 • 93%****NEW ENTRY**

The game that finally stacked up to *Half-Life*. The AI is superb and the atmosphere is terrifying, while the action and plot are perfectly paced and masterfully executed. No shooter fan should be without it.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**MAX PAYNE****PCZ #107 • 90%**

★ It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet-Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**BUDGET****UNREAL TOURNAMENT****PCZ #81 • 89%**

★ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III's* multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188**QUAKE III ARENA****PCZ #87 • 89%**

★ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525**CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING****PCZ #101 • 84%**

★ This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134**PROJECT IGI****PCZ #97 • 82%**

★ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage-oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000**STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE****PCZ #94 • 80%**

★ The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest Trekkie-haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team-mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143 525**BUDGET****SERIOUS SAM****PCZ #102 • 80%**

★ *Serious Sam* is a game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old-fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**BUDGET****GUNMAN CHRONICLES****PCZ #97 • 78%**

★ While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must-have for any fan of the genre.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**STRATEGY****SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR: WARLORDS EDITION****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #89 • 93%**

★ Command huge armies and engage in epic battles, assassinate generals and conquer your way through feudal Japan. This edition further improves the game's stunning 3D engine and also lets you play as the Mongols. Copious in-game options never get in the way of the instant playability of the game. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134**COMMANDOS 2****PCZ #108 • 91%**

★ There have been a few *Commandos* imitators but none have come close to this sequel. If you loved the first game, you're going to love this World War II strategy game even more. One of the most richly detailed games we've ever seen, absolutely massive, and brimming with ideas.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000**COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS****PCZ #101 • 88%**

★ There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144**Z: STEEL SOLDIERS****PCZ #101 • 87%**

★ Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-er-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344**AGE II: GOLD EDITION****PCZ #84 • 87%**

★ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age II*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single- and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000**BUDGET****GROUND CONTROL****PCZ #92 • 86%**

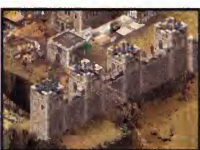
★ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurai, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**SUDDEN STRIKE****PCZ #96 • 85%**

★ *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144**HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm****PCZ #96 • 85%**

★ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**STRONGHOLD****PCZ #110 • 84%**

NEW ENTRY Build a prospering town, defend it and then try to overrun neighbouring strongholds. That's the basic premise of this highly entertaining RTS. Challenging but easy to pick up, it's let down by the lack of a fog of war option.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**SW GALACTIC BATTLEFIELDS****PCZ #109 • 84%**

★ After *Force Commander* everyone was expecting this to fall on its arse, but with the *Age II* engine and an editor that lets you recreate your favourite *Star Wars* battles it's really quite good. It might look a bit old hat but it plays well.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143 525

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME



BUDGET

PCZ #93 • 92%

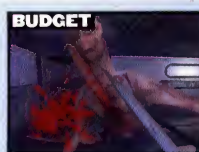
★ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

BUDGET

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 90%



★ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 88%



★ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

THRONE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #109 • 88%



★ An enjoyable party based, strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo*. Take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan on a quest to overthrow the Dark Warlord. Beautiful and bloody.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 9209100

BUDGET

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%



★ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorching of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ #96 • 85%



★ The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ARCANUM

PCZ #106 • 84%



★ Whether you play through as a mage or a techy, you'll still find *Arcanum* hugely entertaining. Don't let its looks fool you – it has a great plot and flexible character development. A massive and addictive game.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

ANACHRONOX

PCZ #105 • 83%



★ The release of *Anachronox* proves *Deus Ex* wasn't a fluke for Ion Storm. OK, it's not as good, but it's an interesting and genuinely funny game in its own right, and we don't get to say that about many games. Well worth a punt.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC

PCZ #107 • 80%



★ This hugely playable game includes a handy 3D camera, along with the type of gameplay that made the first *M&M* so addictive. A must for fans and RPG newbies.

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive 020 7551 4266

BUDGET

FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%



★ Despite the release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more sub-games and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME



BUDGET

PCZ #71 • 88%

★ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

DISC WORLD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%



★ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #98 • 87%



★ Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%



★ Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

HITMAN: CODENAME 47

PCZ #98 • 85%



★ Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

PROJECT EDEN

PCZ #107 • 85%

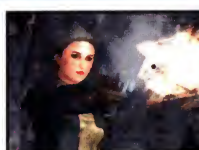


★ You control four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis that is as predictable as it is innovative. The combat and AI may be somewhat dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR

PCZ #96 • 84%



★ As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

BUDGET

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

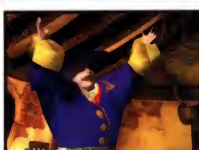


★ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

PCZ #98 • 82%



★ One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you and, undoubtedly, *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in the last couple of years.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%



★ Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK GAME



BUDGET

PCZ #98 • 85%

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP XTREME PCZ #110 • 85%

NEW ENTRY Joins *Colin McRae 2* as the top PC driving game, but the fact that it costs three times as much means it doesn't quite claim top spot. It plays beautifully and even comes with online options. An essential rally game.

PUBLISHER Actualize • 01477 544 455



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 PCZ #96 • 84%

Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a better, but with more cars and races and improved controls, *MM2* is now the daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000



F1 2001 PCZ #109 • 83%

The most versatile F1 game to date, with a full-on sim mode and an arcade setting for those who can't hack it. It looks great as well, but it comes with a huge caveat – if you want to see it as intended you're going to need a hefty machine.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450 134



GRAND PRIX 3 PCZ #94 • 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no teamwork. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated GP2, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



LE MANS 24 HOURS PCZ #87 • 79%

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skilful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



INSANE PCZ #97 • 78%

Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 PCZ #90 • 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



RALLY MASTERS PCZ #89 • 77%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



TOCA 2 PCZ #76 • 76%

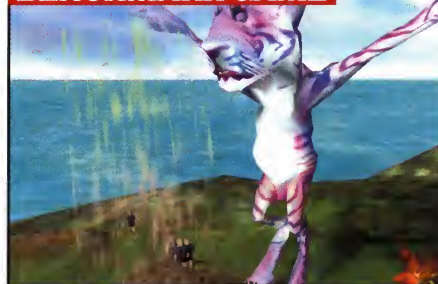
Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

GOD GAMES

BLACK & WHITE

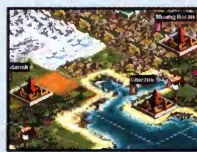
BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #100 • 93%

One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



CALL TO POWER II PCZ #98 • 85%

Civilization II is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



THE SIMS PCZ #87 • 85%

This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



CAESAR III PCZ #70 • 84%

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000 PCZ #74 • 83%

Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01932 450134



ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS PCZ #97 • 83%

From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON PCZ #75 • 82%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060



MONOPOLY TYCOON PCZ #110 • 78%

NEW ENTRY This mixture of the board game and *Theme Park* is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real time, you must make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188



DUNGEON KEEPER 2 PCZ #79 • 75%

Dungeon Keeper was a great idea. *DKII* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING PCZ #70 • 74%

The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Even 'Peterless', the Bullfrog team proved they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

SPORTS

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #108 • 92%

This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series consolidate itself as the best footie management game available on PC. This time around the new features include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats as well as all the new rules that FIFA has imposed on us. Buy it and kiss life goodbye.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

PCZ #98 • 88%



Pro Skater 2 is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break all his bones as he smashes his face against the concrete.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

VIRTUAL POOL 3

PCZ #99 • 85%



VP3 has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FIFA 2001

PCZ #97 • 83%



Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

PCZ #85 • 83%



Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

TENNIS MASTERS SERIES

PCZ #110 • 82%



The best tennis game on the PC so far, but only by a whisker. While the control interface isn't as intuitive as *Open Tennis 2000*, the AI is far superior, and the diversity of opponents is far more varied.

PUBLISHER Microids • 01908 233 377

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

PCZ #92 • 82%



It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000

PCZ #85 • 81%



As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

OPEN TENNIS 2000

PCZ #92 • 80%



Not since Super Tennis on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. For a near identical game with slightly better AI, it's worth checking out *Roland Garros French Open 2001*.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

NHL 2002

PCZ 110 • 79%



Even though it's much the same as its predecessor with a couple of extra bells on, *NHL 2002* combines realism with frenetic arcade action. Not for the faint-hearted, but ice hockey fans and arcade game fans will love it.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS

PCZ #104 • 90%

BENCHMARK GAME



The most anticipated military game of the year was worth all the hype and more. This squad-based shooter can be played in both third- and first-person and is the ultimate military simulation package, with a stunning atmosphere and superb mission structures. Lock yourself away because this game deserves your full attention.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

GHOST RECON

PCZ #110 • 86%



A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

PCZ #79 • 86%



You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

HOSTILE WATERS

PCZ #101 • 86%



A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or leap into a unit and get up close and personal to the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though. Why make love when you can make war?

PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

PCZ #95 • 84%



This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option and almost naked women, which usually makes for a good time.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION

PCZ #97 • 83%

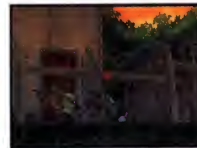


AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN

PCZ #110 • 81%



Although the graphics engine is looking dated, this is the best *Rogue Spear* outing to date. Featuring nine new linked and suspense-filled special forces missions, even veterans of the series will be challenged to their limits.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

SPEC OPS 2

PCZ #84 • 79%



When *Spec Ops 2* came out it challenged *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot. The game puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

RAINBOW SIX GOLD PACK EDITION

PCZ #81 • 79%



A landmark game in third-person action strategy games that was only surpassed by *Hidden & Dangerous*. Take control of your elite anti-terrorist squad, plan your missions ahead and indulge in some old fashioned killing. Also contains the *Eagle Watch* add-on pack.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 854 444

WARGASM

PCZ #71 • 76%



Famed for its flight sims, DID finally delivers an action game only it could produce. With helicopters, APCs and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000

FLIGHT SIMS

IL-2 STURMOVIK

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #110 • 90%

NEW ENTRY Combining incredible atmospherics, sounds and visuals with possibly the most realistic flight model to date, *IL-2* puts you behind the stick of a selection of stunningly reproduced WWII combat planes. The attention to detail is breathtaking and the easy-to-use editor allows endless months of replayability. A must-have for any combat flight sim fanatic.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

PCZ #103 • 88%

★ Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually 'feel right'. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337



FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 87%

★ We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

PCZ #96 • 85%

★ *B17* reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

PCZ #97 • 85%

★ If WWII dogfighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics create a true sense of excitement and realism.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

SPACE COMBAT

X - GOLD

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #82 • 87%

★ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS

PCZ #93 • 86%

★ Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*. Available from www.macgames.co.uk.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



Freespace 2

PCZ #84 • 85%

★ Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, an epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

PCZ #104 • 83%

★ It's likely to appeal more to die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still takes steps to advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing free-form gaming are inspirational.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000



X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 • 81%

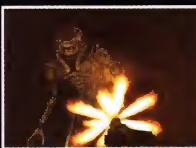
★ At last. Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

ALL-TIME CLASSICS



Ten? Now that's a tricky one, he cried. But after days of soul-searching and constant inner turmoil, Martin Korda finally came up with a definitive list of his favourite games of all time.



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2 (PC)

★ OK, so it hasn't had a chance to become an all-time classic yet, but I feel pretty sure that it will. It's terrifying to psychologically scarring proportions, and all three gripping campaigns (*Alien*, *Predator* and *Marine*) are utterly absorbing. It'll have you sobbing in the corner with fear, and loving every minute of it.



SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR (PC)

★ This is war how it should be. Huge armies engaging in massive slaughterfests over realistic 3D terrains. The fact that you command literally thousands of troops makes it the most authentic, suspense-filled and breathtaking strategy game ever, anywhere, in the history of the world.



WING COMMANDER I-IV (PC)

★ For years, the *Wing Commander* series had PC gamers shelling out obscene amounts of money on state-of-the-art PCs, just so they could experience the frantic space combat and superb interactive FMV-driven storylines of each new *WC* instalment. And yes, I was one of those people.



HOSTILE WATERS (PC)

★ It came out of nowhere and we loved it. This action/strategy game has everything going for it – excellent story, superb battles, strategic variety and lashings of action. As a single-player game, I can hardly fault it. Shame then that there's no multiplayer, and that it didn't sell nearly as many copies as it deserved to.



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS (PC)

★ To still be one of the best games of all time three years after its initial release isn't a boast many games can make. A legend of PC gaming, this FPS reigned supreme longer than any game in PC history and is a must-buy. Tension, great plot, stunning AI and now bundled with *Counter-Strike*. A masterpiece.



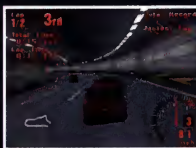
COMMAND AND CONQUER (PC)

★ Few games have had such an impact on the gaming world as *C&C*. Days and nights merged into one indiscernible whole until the evil forces of Nod were vanquished. It was the birth of RTS, and although I'd rather play one of the sequels now, *C&C* dominated my life far more than they ever managed to.



SPEEDBALL 2 (PC)

★ Ah, the sweet sound of knuckledusters on skulls, the cry of the ice-cream vendor plying his wares as the victim of a brutal beating is carried off the field. That's what *Speedball 2* is all about. Think handball meets an England football fan riot and you're just about getting close.



GRAN TURISMO (PSX)

★ Racing games have never been the PC's forte. It's had a fair old go, but there's never been a game like *GT* to help while away those post-pub hours between drunken babbling and unconsciousness. It's easy to play, infuriatingly hard to master and has loads of realistic-feeling sports cars. What more could you want?




TEKKEN 3 (PSX)

★ If there's one thing the PC is shit at, it's beat 'em ups. And as fighting games go, they don't get much better than *Tekken 3*. With more special moves and combos than you could hope to memorise in a lifetime, and an authentic-martial-art-cum-arcade feel, this is the most enjoyable beat 'em up to date.



DEATHTRACK (PC)

★ You don't remember this one do you? Way back in 1989, this gem of a racing game from Dynamix totally failed to take the world by storm and was quickly forgotten by everyone bar me. Which was a real shame as its high-speed blow-up-the-opposition racing action has never been bettered by anyone.



TALKING HEADS

We jumped on the first available X-Wing (OK, so it was a 747 really) to visit lifelong *Star Wars* fan and *Galactic Battlegrounds* project director Garry M Gaber in California

★ GOING SOLO KEITH PULLIN

After studying art at college Garry Gaber now finds himself glued to the equally colourful *Star Wars* universe. He's worked on five *Star Wars* titles for LucasArts, a period which included a particularly rocky ride as project leader on *Force Commander*, though most recently he's been the man responsible for the impressive *Galactic Battlegrounds*. We chatted to him about those two games, *Star Wars* fans, his thoughts on RTSs and a morphing snail called Mortimer.

Force Commander is the only other RTS based on the *Star Wars* universe. What did you learn from that experience that helped you on *Galactic Battlegrounds*?

Good question. *Force Commander* was meant to be very innovative. It was technologically advanced in a lot of ways. It was a 3D attempt at RTS which is something that is only now just starting to happen. So, one of the things I learnt was to be very mindful of the camera; to make sure that the camera is something that becomes almost second nature to the player. In other words, don't make it into another character in the game.

Are you saying that the camera was what ruined the game?

I wouldn't say that. What I would say is that possibly having more control over the camera, having some kind of default setting would have helped a great deal. There was actually one in there, but it was so buried it wasn't obvious to the players. If I could go back and do it again I would have a default camera in there, so you could just hit a button to change it and move it around the battlefield.

So would you consider doing something like *Force Commander* again but with someone else's engine, possibly the *Earth 2150* engine or something similar?

“I think that 3D is still in its infancy as far as RTSs are concerned. The biggest problem is recognition of units”

It's entirely possible, but I think that 3D is still in its infancy as far as RTSs are concerned. The biggest problem is recognition of units. Because an RTS by definition has, say, 200 or 250 units to control, you have to get high enough above them so that you can see all of them and also be able to recognise them. In 3D you don't have enough polygons yet to do that without buying a 2Ghz machine with about 256Mb of RAM... And a great graphics card, of course.

You've worked on several *Star Wars* titles. Which ones did you most enjoy?

Well, a large part of my early game-developing experience was in the art side of things. I worked on *Rebel Assault 2* which was my first game with LucasArts. I learned a lot about level design on that. All the levels were pre-rendered and it was what we used to call 'on-rails'. But I learned a lot about modelling and also how to create interesting levels. After that I worked on *Shadows Of The Empire*, *Mortimer* and *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* and each one of those games taught me a lot. Everything you learn is valuable in building later games. Working with Justin Chin on *Jedi Knight* was a great experience in seeing how he actually led the project and also just working on the art of that game was a great experience.

OK, *Galactic Battlegrounds*. Describe it in one word.

It's hard to sum a game up in one word, but I would say the main word that comes to mind is probably 'solid'. We have more than 3,000 art assets integrated into the game and more than 1,500 sounds. There's so much material and it's working on an engine that's extremely solid, even on very low-spec machines. I have to say I'm very happy with what we've accomplished. I also have to say



Galactic Battlegrounds is the best Star Wars RTS ever.



Games on rails... Whatever happened to them?



The dodgy camera was a huge letdown in Force Commander.



Han Solo mode.

that having Han Solo in the *Millennium Falcon* was a great suggestion of yours, so thank you!

That's OK - it's good to know you're listening! Apparently fans as well as cynical old journalists like myself have had plenty to say during GB's development. What kind of things did they want?

Like I said, *Galactic Battlegrounds* is about assets. It's about creating art assets and sound assets that basically fill in the universe, almost like a virtual toy box in a way. One of the biggest parts of the game is the scenario editor and the ability for the fans to create their own scenarios.

So do you think that's the way to please Star Wars fans?

I think that it's an important factor, but it's in addition to all the other game modes. The single-player campaign and the multiplayer mode are very robust. There's a lot going on in the game - it's very deep. But being able to give players specific units in the scenario editor is a great thing because we are actually able to fulfil that desire. For instance, we had not planned to do a TIE-Defender, but a lot of fans were saying: "We really want to see it, it's one of our favourite *Star Wars* units, we'd love to see it in the game." So we added it. A Sandcrawler was

never going to be in there either, but we threw it in because we were doing a lot of Tatooine stuff and from what the fans were saying we realised it would be a big omission. In addition to Han Solo and the *Millennium Falcon*, things like this definitely enrich the experience and wherever possible we'll do it.

And is it likely that you'll produce a mission disc to cover suggestions that couldn't be fulfilled... Like those to do with *Star Wars: Episode II*, for example?

“One of the biggest parts of *Galactic Battlegrounds* is the scenario editor and the ability for fans to create their own scenarios”

Erm, I cannot confirm or deny anything at this point of course. But those would be good suggestions, probably. Actually, our legal department is right under my office. I have to say there's a hole right here [points to floor] and it hurts a lot if I say anything I shouldn't.

Fair enough. You seem to be shaking from what must be a small electric shock, so we'd better move on. What kind of game would you like to work on in the future?

There are a couple of genres I haven't really worked on that I get excited about, but RTS is my first love. If I could do RTSs for the next 20 years I would be happy. I love racing games as well but there's not as much potential here to do that kind of a game. I also like flight simulators - not arcade simulators but actual flight simulators - they're lots of fun. But again, there's probably not as much potential to do that kind of game here.

Can you ever see yourself taking a break from *Star Wars* games and working on something else for a change?

The problem is it's not in my contract. When I started here at LucasArts I made sure they said whatever game I work on has to have 'Star' and 'Wars' in the title. That's a joke, by the way. I am a huge *Star Wars* fan though. I've worked on one non-*Star Wars* game since I've been here. That was *Mortimer* - it was a kids' game. It was quite interesting, actually. It was about a giant snail that could convert himself into different flying machines and submarines. I got to do all the modelling on the snail. I morphed him into a helicopter in one scene - it was a lot of fun.

Sounds utterly bizarre. So what else have you got planned for us? I know you're off on ➔



It beats trying to find a giant banana skin.



The man himself: Garry M. Gaber.



← a well-earned holiday now after finishing *Galactic Battlegrounds*. What will you be working on when you get back in the office? I do have another project in the works right now, but I can't talk about it. When it's public I'll be glad to talk about it and tell everyone what's going on.

All right, let's talk about other people's games then. What RTS games are you looking forward to in the coming months? It looks like a pretty exciting time with *Praetorians* and *Empire Earth*. Would you agree?

I'm more into the top-down sort of approach. I've just played *Emperor: Battle For Dune* and was not as thrilled with it as I expected to be. I'm also looking forward to *Age Of Mythology* and *WarCraft III*. Personally, I'm not that excited about *Empire Earth*. I don't think it will be my type of game.

But *Empire Earth* is not that different from *AOK* and *Galactic Battlegrounds*...

It's more of a 3D experience, though. Of course I'm going to try it, I'm just not looking forward to it in the same way as *Age Of Mythology*. I still think you need a lot more polygons to make a 3D game a compelling experience. I just haven't seen a 3D engine yet that has done it effectively enough.

“I still think you need a lot more polygons to make a 3D game a compelling experience. I haven't yet seen an effective 3D engine”

So where do you stand on resource management?

It really depends on the gameplay and what you're after. A certain component of these types of games is micro-management and infrastructure. Resource management is a great way to create infrastructure. It also creates something in the world to go out and collect and fight over. Without resource collection the game becomes more of a tactical experience

and less of a strategic experience. So, I guess I'm on the side of resource management if I'm playing a strategic game. If I were after more of a tactical game I would probably bag resource collection.

So you're saying there's room for both and that we should all get along and be nice to each other?

Exactly. It really does depend on the game. I think something like *Homeworld* would be lost without resource collection – it was a really interesting part of the game. The same is true for *Age Of Kings*. It's gives you something compelling to do and something compelling to defend. It gives you something in the world to seek out besides combat.

So, there you go. In typical LucasArts fashion not much was given away. However, we reckon Garry's next project will be something to do with *Star Wars: Episode II*. Stay tuned to find out if we're right or wrong. See ya soon. [M]

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| A - 01
Age of Empires 1 & 2
Airfix Dogfighter
Airport Inc
Airport Tycoon
Alien vs Predator
Allens vs Predator 2
Androsia War (Battle Isle)
Arcanum
Army Men 1 & 2
Army Men: Air tactics
Army Men: Toys in Space | B - 02
Baldur's Gate
B's Gate 2 Shadow of Amn
B's Gate 2: Throne of Bhaal
Baldur's Gate: Sword Coast
Beach Head 2000
Black & White
Broken Sword 1 & 2 | C - 03
C & C Red Alert 2: Y's Rev.
C & C: Firestorm
C & C: Red Alert
C & C: Red Alert 2
C & C: Tiberian Sun
Caesar
Caesar 3
Champ. Manager 2001
Championship Manager 3
Championship Manager 99
Civilisation 3
Codename: Outbreak
Colin McRae Rally 2
Command & Conquer
Commandos 1 & 2
Conflict Zone
Constructor
Corporate Machine
Cossacks: European Wars
Crusaders of Might & Magic
Cuthroats | D - 04
Deadly Dozen
Death Trap Dungeon
Deer Hunter 5
Delta Force 1, 2 & L. War.
Descent
Desperados
Deus-Ex
Diablo 1 & 2
Dino Crisis
Discworld Noir
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Driver
DS9: Dominion Wars
Dune 2000
Dungeon Keeper
Dust | E - 05
Earthworm Jim 1
Emperor - Battle for Dune
Escape from Monkey Island
Everquest
Extreme Paintbrawl 2 | F - 06
F-22 Raptor
FA F. Lgue F'ball Man. 2002
Fargate
Fate of the Dragon
FIFA 2000, 2001 & 2002
Flight Unlimited 2
Forsaken
Four by Four Evolution
Frontier Wars
Fur Fighters | G - 07
Galactic Battlegrounds
Gangsters | H - 08
Half Life
Half Life: Blue Shift
Half Life: Opposing Force
Hard Truck
Harry Potter: Philo's Stone
Heavy Gear
Heroes of M&M III
Hidden & Dangerous
Hitman
Hogs of War
Hostile Waters
Hoyle's Casino 2001
Hugo: Black Diamond Fever
Hyper Blade | I - 09
I. Jones: Inf. Machine
I.G.I. (Project)
Independence War 1 & 2 | J - 10
Jane's F-15
Jazz Jackrabbit 2
Jedi Knight | K - 11
Kingdom Under Fire
Kingspin
Klingon Honor Guard | L - 12
Leadfoot: Offroad Racing
London Racer
Lost Empire of Atlantis | M - 13
M&M: Mandate of Heaven
Madden NFL 2001
Mat Hoffman's BMX
Max Payne
Mech Commander 1 & 2
Mech Warrior 4
Men in Black
Mercedes Benz Truck Racing
Metal Fatigue
Microsoft Train Simulator
Midtown Madness 1 & 2
Mob Rule
Monkey Island Series
Monopoly Tycoon
Motocross Madness 2
Mummy
Myst 3
Myth: The Fallen Lords | N - 14
NASCAR 1999 Edition
NFS 3: Hot Pursuit
Normandy: WW2
Nox | O - 15
Oil Tycoon
Operation Flash Point
Outpost 2 | P - 16
Paris-Dakar Rally
Pearl Harbour: Zero Hour
Pharaoh
Player Manager 99
Political Tycoon
Pool of Radiance
Project IGI | Q - 17
Quest for Glory 5
R - 18
Rainbow Six
Rally Championship 2000 | S - 19
Rayman 2
RC Tycoon: C'screw Follies
Red Alert 2 (C & C)
Red Faction
Re-volt
Rogue Spear
Roller Coaster Tycoon | S - 20
S. Trek: Deep Space 9
S. Wars: Phantom Menace
S. Wars: Rogue Squadron
Seedogs
Septerra Core
Seventh Guest
Severance: Blade of Dark.
Sim City 2000 & 3000
Simpsons
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Sims House Party
Sims: Livin' It Up
Skidoo - X-Team Racing
Soldier of Fortune
Spiderman
Sports Car GT
Star Trek: Birth of Fed.
Star Trek: Generations
Star Wars: Battle Naboo
Star Wars: Galactic B.
StarCraft
Start Fleet Academy
Stronghold
Sudden Strike
Swat 3 | T - 20
Tachyon: The Fringe
Test Drive 4 & 6
The Curse of Monkey Island
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Theme Park Inc
Theme Park World
Thief: Dark Project
Tiberian Sun
Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
Total Annihilation
Transport Tycoon
Triple Play Series
Tropico
Turok 2 | U - 21
Ultimate Ride
Unreal
Unreal Tournament | V - 22
Vietnam 2
Vietnam: Black Ops
Viper Racing
V-Rally | W - 23
War Inc.
Warhammer
Warlords 3
Warzone 2100
Wing Commander 4
World War 2 GI
World War 2: Iwo Jima
World War 3: Black Gold
Worms 2
Worms World Party | X - 24
X-Com Apocalypse
X-Team Racing | Z - 26
Z: Steel Soldiers
Zero Hour: Pearl Harbour
Zeus: Master of Olympus
Zeus-Poseidon Expansion
Zoo Tycoon |
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RETRO ZONE

In 1992 The Red Hot Chilli Peppers were Under The Bridge and *Dave Woods* was underpaid, undersexed and over here



They don't make box art like this anymore, thank the Lord.

WOLFENSTEIN 3D

The game where time began

It's hard to imagine a world without first-person shooters, but before it did released *Wolfenstein 3D* the genre didn't exist. *Doom* might have been the game that hammered the point home, but this was still the first 3D FPS and it let you shoot Nazis in the head. (Even though calling it '3D' might have been a bit of a misnomer because you couldn't actually look up and down, jump, or do

anything in fact – apart from turn left and right, move forwards and backwards and fire.) Revisiting the game is pretty hard when you compare it to the stuff we've been playing since, but its place in history is beyond question. It's fascinating to see how far things have come technologically if nothing else, and this Christmas the series comes full circle with the release of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

Back in 1992, *Wolfenstein 3D* was state of the art. The (admittedly crude) 3D visuals, sound and music were way ahead of anything else and the marketing model ensured that millions of people experienced the title. As with *Doom*, the first episode was released as shareware (to this day you can still download it from www.3dactionplanet.com/wolfenstein) and the game itself went on to sell more than 250,000 copies.



Nazis were your enemy and big fat Nazis were even worse.



Tasteful art was plastered around liberally, ensuring a trouble-free release in Germany.

THE BEST OF THE REST



NEW ZEALAND STORY
(Amiga/NES/C64/Arcade)

From the *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* family of games, this was an omni-directional scrolling platformer that was apparently conceived when a Japanese programmer from Taito went to New Zealand for his holidays. You played Tiki, a Kiwi bird, and you had to rescue your Kiwi mates from the evil walrus. Twisted genius.



STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY
(PC)

Everyone knows the original *Star Trek* was the best and proof came by way of this not-half-bad attempt at converting it onto the PC. The game was made up of eight unconnected missions that played like TV episodes, and combined arcade action (sit in your ship and scrap it out with aliens) and adventure elements (beam yourself down onto an alien planet and solve puzzles).



SMASH TV
(NES/Spectrum/Arcade)

In the beginning Williams created *Robotron*, a game that was almost as difficult as *Defender* or *Battlezone*. The '90s saw the full colour update, *Smash TV*, which was converted onto the NES. You could use two joypads (one to move, one to shoot) in your quest to impress MC Mayhem, host of the deadly game show where you had to collect cash and shoot everything that moved.



WWF
(SNES)

The homo-erotic entertainment series featuring big shaved biokes in pink Lycra has actually been around for decades. In fact, some of the brutes headlining today were treading the boards back in 1992 – like *The Undertaker* – although in this game every wrestler sported the same moves. The verdict? Piss-poor in single-player mode but a laugh against your mates.



STARBLADE
(Arcade)

Starblade was one of the new breed of arcade machines that employed cheap tricks to fool you into thinking you were experiencing full-on VR. Sitting in a cockpit you had to blast everything in sight while the vibrating seat gave your posterior a treat. Ultimately though, you didn't even get to fly your ship – it was a game on rails, à la *Operation Wolf*.

DARKSEED

In a parallel universe, no one can hear you scream

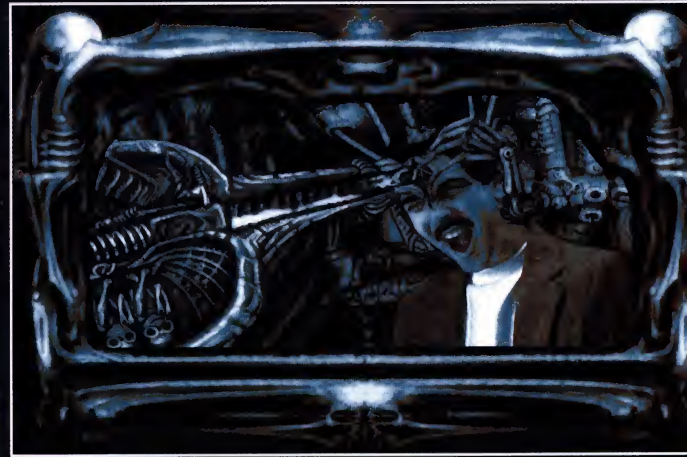
The PC might be showing the way today as far as visuals go, but back in 1992 it was struggling to hold its own. So, when Mirage approached HR Giger in a bid to secure his services as art consultant on its new adventure

title, he wasn't immediately convinced. In the end he agreed, with the stipulation that all the backgrounds were rendered in high resolution, with the payoff being a heavily reduced customised colour palette. The developers had access to the Giger library and picked a few of his works to be digitised, and the results were stunning (remember this was 1992). The point-and-click game featured 75 hi-res locations, and although

the game wasn't the best in the world (the plot involved you racing against time through a parallel universe with an alien embryo stuck inside your head), the atmosphere generated was truly menacing and the visual tone set the standard for adventure games to come. A reasonably popular 'more of the same' sequel was released in 1995, and snapped up by teens with an unhealthy interest in black.



One of the Giger originals, Li_I, that was used in the production of the game.



Now this won't hurt a bit. Open wide...

STOP PRESS

GAMING NEWS FROM MAY '92

After what seemed like an eternal wait, the Super Nintendo console finally hit British shelves at the price of £149.99. *Super Mario World* was included in the box by way of thank you, and if you had any cash left you could choose from *F-Zero* and *Super Tennis*, the only two other games immediately available.

However, better was to come. In the same month Nintendo also released details of the 'world's largest light-gun'. Resembling a rocket launcher,

the Superscope was the first and last shoulder-mounted peripheral, and died a dismal death on release. Obviously.

Games were at the front of engineers' minds at Commodore this month with news of the A600. A slight update on the old Amiga classic, the A600 was a bad attempt to woo console fans by doing away with the numeric keypad to make the case smaller. We're not that stupid.

Superscope was big but not too clever.



between Nintendo and Sony. An agreement had been reached between them whereby Sony would release a machine (PlayStation) compatible with the SNES. Somewhere along the way they fell out, Sony said they'd make their own machine, Nintendo said 'yeah right' and Sony proceeded to make the killer system that went on to take 50 per cent of the market share. Oh, how they laughed...



F-15 Strike Eagle allowed you to fly historically accurate missions with rubbish graphics.

Flight sims were big back in 1992, and apparently the world was 'excited' by the news that Microprose was converting its F15 simulator for both the NES and GameBoy, and shortly after for the SNES.

Meanwhile, two brothers finished compiling a football management game in their bedrooms. The project sported made-up foreign players and was obviously doomed to commercial failure. Its name? *Championship Manager*.

With the advent of the SNES on British shores, 1992 was also the year that chronicled the hilarious spat



The freedom of flight in your own home.

EXTENDEDPLAY

Extended Play this month is yet another orgasmic mix of blood-curdling gore and nail-biting strategy. Hardcore fraggers can get their kicks with the eagerly awaited *Tribes 2*, while the more sedate can send thousands of troops to their doom in *Shogun: Total War*

★ KEEPING IT GOING Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF



Installation of all these maps and missions is pretty straightforward, but remember to always check out .zip files for any special instructions.

For *Tribes 2*, the maps and Necrobones map pack should be unzipped into the Tribes2/GameData/base directory. In the case of the Necrobones map pack, make sure that the "use folders" option is enabled, as there are a variety of different files that have to unzip into various sub-directories.

For *Shogun: Total War*, you'll find that the map pack from www.totalwar.org contains its own self-installer, and so long as you know where to find *Shogun* on your hard drive, it'll do the rest all on its own. Maps can then be selected from the New Game - Custom Battle menu in the usual fashion. Then it's just a matter of settling down to enjoy the war.

TRIBES 2

Tribes 2 probably has the lowest profile among online FPS games, but has gained a firm fanbase seemingly without denting the popularity of more established shooters. It provides the outdoor environments and usable vehicles that most other games are lacking and combines the futuristic appeal of *Unreal Tournament* with the majestic landscapes of *Delta Force*. Its predecessor, *StarForge: Tribes* proved wildly popular in the USA, but less so in the UK, becoming very much a "niche" game here. *Tribes 2* is doing better, and with more goodies appearing daily its future looks rosy.

★ Necrobones CTF Map Pack v3

Author Necrobones

Filename necroctf.vl2.zip

Size 1.7Mb

Rating ★★★★★

No less than 24 CTF maps for your server or LAN party, all in one easy installing file. Check out this lot...

TWIN TOWERS A pair of huge towers rise 2000ft above the landscape. Each has a flag and defence turrets making this a pretty advanced hardcore map for experienced players.



① Twin Towers is a very original map, and the towers are much taller than they look here

NUMBER OF THE BEAST



Make use of the platforms and good jetting skills whenever you can

CHILL FACTOR In this frozen landscape map, you can capture the enemy base while stealing the flag to make their turrets work for you. Enemy troops will be temporarily held at bay by their own defences.



① The weather here is as cool as the welcome you'll get from the enemy team

CIRCLE OF STONES Ageing hippies will love the Stonehenge style stone circle in the middle of this map - you'd almost think you were there. Lots of obstacles make for good close-quarter action.



① See? It's Stonehenge... told you so! Circle of Stone is a neat map for hippies everywhere

URBAN WARFARE *Tribes 2* goes city-bound in this map, with lots of wildly futuristic buildings to capture and a sneaky underwater route to move across the map without getting shot.



① A futuristic urban atmosphere and plenty to do in Urban Warfare

HANGAR 18 A huge storage and construction area sits smack bang between the two bases in this map. The team that captures it has a big advantage, so get there fast and stake your claim.



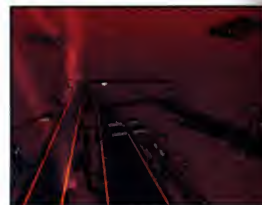
① The Hangar is chock full with every type of vehicle making its capture a real bonus

DARK SKIES One for the jetpack fans with big bases floating nearly a kilometre up in the air. Force bridges are there but can be destroyed, so watch your footing. Aerial skills will win the day here.



① Dark by name and dark by nature. Jetting skills are paramount here.

HOSTILITY Lots of intertwining bridges and platforms, aerial bases, lava below and frequent lightning and meteor strikes makes for a nasty place to hang out, but a cool place to get some fragging action.



① Lots of narrow bridges with frequent lightning and meteor strikes makes for an exciting map

ARTILLERY Tanks, tanks and more tanks. Artillery is all about ground-based vehicles so expect lots of heavy firepower coming your way. Flags and generators are spread apart, so watch your defensive tactics.



① Big firepower aplenty in Artillery. Get to a vehicle pad and get kitted out!

NET ADDRESSES

www.pczone.co.uk

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TRIBES II

www.planettribes.com

The ubiquitous 'planet' site. Plenty of news, game hints and tips, maps and more.

www.tribes2maps.com

The biggest resource for T2 maps about. Top class.

www.planettribes.com/necrobones/tribes2

Creator of the Bones mod and the CTF map-pack, this is Necrobones' own T2 dedicated page. There's lots here too...

www.planettribes.com/belial/

Where to find the full gen on the Belial bot. Full details of installation and configuration can be found here. Read it carefully.

<http://tribes2.sierra.com/>

The official Sierra/Dynamix website for the game. Lots of news, gameplay details, links and more.

www.tribalwar.com

News, clan and match details, files, links and loads of other *Tribes 2* stuff, too.

AIR SUPPORT 2 A map where good use of aerial vehicles should guarantee victory. The bases float high in the air and are widely spaced so walking isn't an option and jetpacks won't last long enough. Team tactics are essential here.



⚡ You'll need perfect jet control to get around in Air Support

WETWORLD 2 Not a crap film with Kevin Costner, but a neat little map with small pockets of dry ground in an otherwise flooded landscape. Defence can be hard – the water hides an approaching attack.

Also in the map pack you'll find Hypothermia, Reservoir, Phlegathon, SB Fortress, Spy vs Spy, Poison, Island Bridges, Sarcophagus, Tartarus, Fields of Fire, Desert Guns, Arctic Flight, Ocean Floor and StormDash.



☁ Yet again the weather forecasters fail to predict heavy rainfall

★ Erebus

Author Dave "Diamondback" Meddish
Filename erebus.v12
Size 301kb
Rating ★★★★★



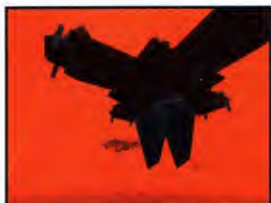
🔥 Lava pools in Erebus will catch the unwary

This CTF outing is one of the most visually impressive maps about. The flag starts off in the open, protected by forcefields and two generators, which will soon become the focus of the attacking team. If the defenders allow the generators to be destroyed then a flag capture is almost inevitable. The terrain is an improbable mix of snow and lava, but while critics will scoff at the proximity of these, the physics of reality

should be put aside to enjoy the view. Erebus is as full of action as any fan could want, with lots of eye-candy and a terrain that allows plenty of skiing and sniping but makes ground-vehicles less of an advantage. A LAN-party must-have.

★ Brimstone

Author (FSC)Gonk
Filename brimstone.v12
Size 58Kb
Rating ★★★★★



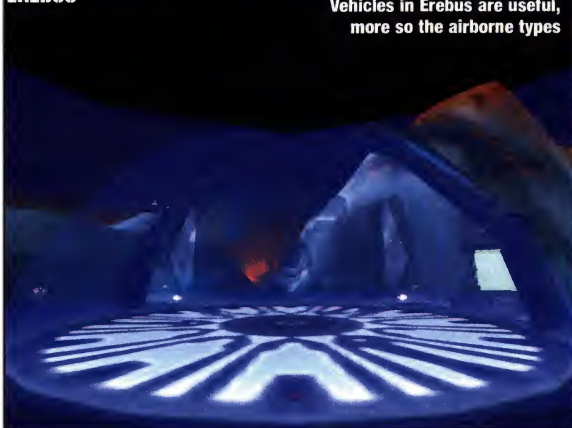
🔥 Lava offers you a warm welcome if you miss your footing in this map

An aerial map where jetting skills will be pushed to the limit. Get it wrong and you'll be paying a quick and unpleasant trip down to the lava that sits underneath the bases. The central tower can be captured and its turrets used to your benefit, but capturing this is really easy, so don't rely on it for long unless you can spare team members to defend it. Small platforms provide additional landing spots for those who don't want to travel on a transport, but watch out for sniper shots if you use these. Action can get pretty frantic – especially on that central tower.

★ Number of the Beast

Author ToKrZ
Filename numberofthebeast.v12
Size 383Kb
Rating ★★★★★
Small, fast and furious is the best description of this map, which might not appeal to all Tribes 2 fans, but proves that T2 doesn't have to be all about big areas, lengthy jetpack runs and low scores.

EREBUS



Vehicles in Erebus are useful, more so the airborne types



⚡ An unpleasant battleground awaits the teams in NotB

The landscape is an inferno of colour, with lots of lava, lightning, and airborne platforms providing good positions for bombarding enemy players.

★ Belial's Bots (Not on the CD)

Author Belial
Filename allbase.exe
Size 11.2Mb
Rating ★★★★★

Lack of bot support is probably Tribes 2's single greatest fault, which is strange for a game so dedicated to the multiplayer experience. Not everyone wants to go online and get their butt kicked by more experienced players – many want to be able to practice first – and the solution to that problem lies in giving them something to shoot at. Thus Belial's Bots was born and although unfortunately it's not on the CD, it's nonetheless one of the "must-have" add-ons for Tribes 2 if you want to have any chance at surviving online. Bots are available for all types of gameplay and can be configured for any level of experience. You want stupid canon-fodder bots? You got 'em. You want terminator bots? You can have them too.

There's far too much to describe about Belial's bots in these few words, so head over to www.planettribes.com/belial and check out the website. The installs are manageable, and the configuration relatively straightforward with a bit of care and thought. Give 'em a go if you think you're hard enough.

BRIMSTONE



You have to get your jet control spot on in Brimstone

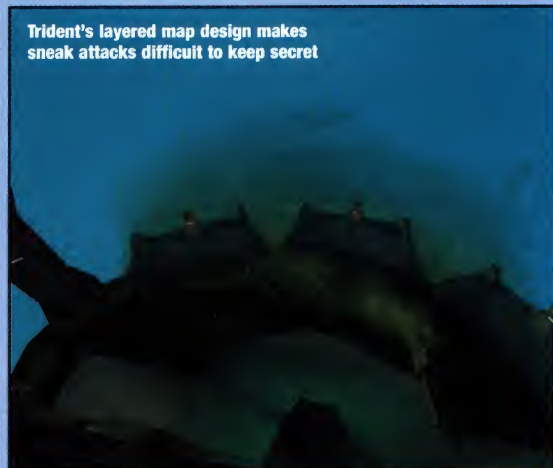
TRIDENT (SIEGE MAP)

MAP OF THE MONTH
TRIBES 2

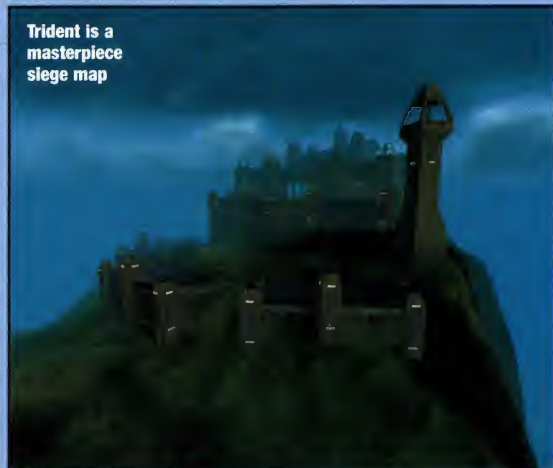
Author: Dynamix Dev Team
Filename: trident.v12
Size: 1.9Mb
Rating: ★★★★★

If you're a fan of the Siege style of map, then this effort from the Dynamix team themselves is sure to tickle your fancy. The playing area is easily big enough for large teams to benefit, and the use of repairable side-bases (which can then become more convenient spawn points) is a welcome feature that reduces out-of-action time to a minimum. Trident definitely needs well-balanced teams to make the battle worthwhile, however, as there are enough exploitable features of the map to make a quick win possible for either side if the opposition isn't up to scratch. This is a good map to show CTF-loving friends a new style of gameplay to see what they've been missing.

Trident's layered map design makes sneak attacks difficult to keep secret



Trident is a masterpiece siege map



SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

Despite having been reviewed as long ago as *ZONE 89*, *Shogun: Total War* has sat in a commanding benchmark position at the top of our Strategy game listing ever since. It's no surprise either, because *STW* is just such a well-rounded game, with elements to appeal to all fans of the genre, be they keen armchair tacticians or just fans of a bloody good scrap. You can spend your time outwitting your enemies on the battlefield, or dedicate your efforts to more nefarious methods, employing envoys and assassins to coerce or simply murder them instead. Instantly playable, but with a level of involvement missing in the majority of games, *Shogun: Total War* is fun all the way.

The map pack from totalwar.org has no less than 102 maps in it. We looked at a few of them in *ZONE 103*, and here's a further selection to whet your appetite...

★ Plateau of Death

Author Doug Barnett
Filename plateau.jjm
Size 93k
Rating ★★★★★



① Attack around the plateau for a strong flanking manoeuvre

Plateau would have to be every attacking commander's



nightmare, and a dream for most defenders too. The map is heavily wooded, which serves to break up attacking formations but allows defenders to stay well hidden until they can be called in to attack at a critical moment. The two armies face each other from either side of a raised plateau and while flanking manoeuvres could be employed to creep up on an unwary foe, these forces would be very vulnerable to attack by defenders hidden in the surrounding trees. Tactically, the defence is in a strong position and only really vulnerable if long-range weapons (with suitable heavy troops in support) can be put on the higher ground.

★ Wooded Arena

Author Kraellin
Filename woodedarena-1.jjm
Size 38.2k
Rating ★★★★★



① Open ground is at a premium in Wooded Arena

Wooded Arena is a difficult map to win, with a central lowland area surrounded on all sides by steep mountainous ridges. What makes this map such a horror to fight is the sheer number of trees – apart from a few small areas of open grassland the map is a giant forest – and this makes majestic set-piece battle tactics quite impossible. A small hill in the middle is the only area of high ground and defending this would be near pointless as it is so insignificant. The only

consolation for an attacker is that his troops are as invisible to the enemy as the enemy is to him, and if he's lucky then he may be able to split his forces undetected and attack on more than one front, but this carries a heavy risk if superior forces are encountered in the woods.

★ Desert

Author Yoshikane
Filename desert.jjm
Size 60.3k
Rating ★★★★★



① Desert gives little cover, so it's all about quick-choice battle tactics here

Desert is an unusual map for *Shogun*, which so often sees lush grasslands, forests and rivers. Here the terrain is much less inviting, with no trees or sharp changes in elevation to provide shelter or natural defensive positions. Instead, combatants must make use of the small hills that might hide their troops from enemy view and position their forces wisely to make best use of what little concealment there is. This is a great map for the desktop general who likes to try out a variety of different tactics – pincer movement or head-on attack? Ambush or slow attrition on multiple fronts? You can try them all out here. As with any map where mobility is no problem, it's inherently easier to reinforce any one part of the battlefield, but remember that your enemy can do so too and what looks like a thin enemy line could easily be a trick that leads you into much more serious trouble.

★ Nagashima Delta

Author Tosa Inu
Filename nagashimadelta.jjm
Size 78.2
Rating ★★★★★



① You start Nagashima Delta with a commanding high-elevation view

Nagashima is a historical battle recreating a 1574 fight between Oda Nobunaga and the Ikko Ikki

TE-CENTENNIAL

MAP OF THE MONTH
TE-CENTENNIAL

Author Terazawa
Filename te_centennium.jjm
Size 64.8k
Rating ★★★★★

Te-Centennium is one of the most spectacular maps you'll ever see for *Shogun* (or in real life, for that matter) with a central plain, a couple of small hamlets and the most jaw-dropping mountain escarpment outside the Himalayas. As an attacker, you'll start with the mountains behind you and attack northwards across the plain towards another, smaller mountain range. The hilly nature of the plain makes it possible to move your forces without being observed, but a canny defender will use the higher ground to his advantage in placing archers and musketeers. Skilful use of cover to outflank the enemy is possible, but very difficult, and if you get forced back onto the mountains your losses will be very heavy.



Centennium has a truly spectacular backdrop



This map isn't easy – a head-on attack is usually a recipe for disaster

warrior monks. The Ikko Ikki were fanatical, highly trained fighters so don't expect an easy ride, and the location – marshland, swamp and rivers – certainly won't make life any easier for you. What stands in your favour is that here you are in a defensive position, on high ground, and the enemy is forced to march across this unfriendly terrain to reach you. Also, the monks will be canalised by the waterways and this will enable you to concentrate your long-range weapons on them. However, don't underestimate your enemy, or you'll get a nasty shock. This battle is harder than you think. [X]

NET ADDRESSES

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

www.totalwar.com

The official *Shogun* website. 'Nuff said.

www.totalwar.org

A great fansite with maps, screens, discussion forums, utilities and loads more. A definite bookmark!

<http://terazawa.totalwar.org>

A site to help you win at *Shogun*. You'll find historical information, tactical tips, downloads and a translation of Sun Tzu's *The Art Of War*, which should be essential reading for any tactician.

<http://samurai.bigsitcity.com>

A website that isn't just specifically to do with *Shogun*, but is a wealth of information about the samurai way of life. Well worth a visit.



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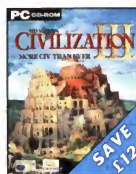
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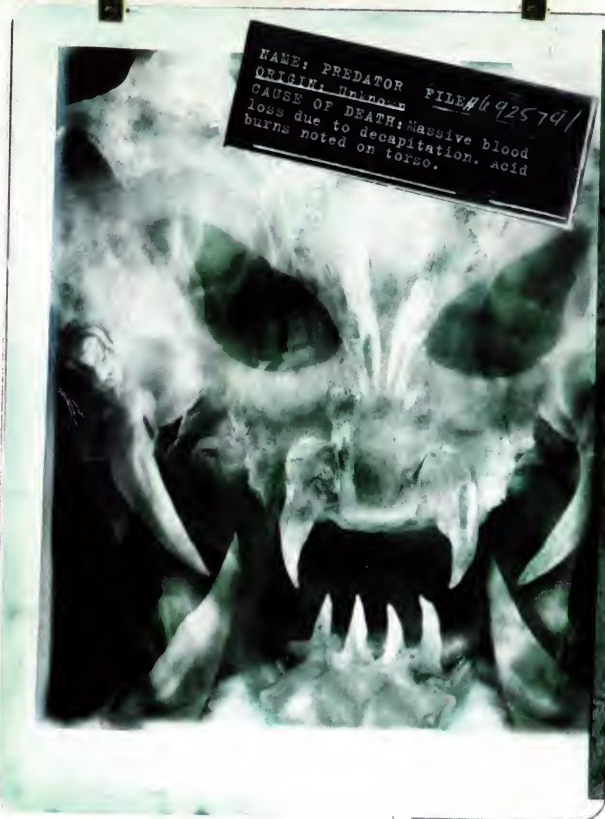


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